

**Research on the Development of Career Counseling Models  
for Taiwanese Student-athletes**

By  
**Po-Wen Wang**

王柏雯

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This senior paper was presented

By

Po-wen Wang

王柏雯

It was defended on  
November 18, 2023  
And approved by

Reviewer 1: YuJane Chen, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer 2: Ren-Her Hsieh, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: Margarita Shue, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Research on the Development of Career Counseling Models for Taiwanese Student-athletes**

Po-Wen Wang, BA

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2024

## **Abstract**

This research intends to investigate the career development counseling model for student-athletes in Taiwan. A substantial number of student-athletes in this region encounter challenges in terms of career readiness, often prioritizing the development of sports-related skills over occupational skills for future employment. Consequently, this societal issue contributes to premature attrition among student-athletes. In this study, interviews were conducted with student-athletes who have engaged in sports since an early age, representing six distinct sports disciplines: fencing, tennis, squash, gymnastics, athletics, and swimming. The dual responsibilities of being a student and an athlete necessitate a significant time commitment to training, leaving minimal room for pursuing a secondary specialization. As expounded upon in this study, athletes confront formidable obstacles during their career transitions. The premature loss of talent resulting from early retirement decisions underscores a deficiency in government resources, funding, and relevant support. Isn't it a tragedy for the Taiwanese sports industry as we pursue to be a developed country?

Keywords: Student-athlete, Career Counseling Models, Career Transitions

# 臺灣學生運動員生涯輔導模式之研究

王柏雯

文藻外語大學國際事務系

## 摘要

本研究旨在探討台灣學生運動員的職業發展輔導模型。許多學生運動員在職涯準備方面落後，因長時間專注於與體育相關的技能，而不是著手就業準備相關的技能。因此，這促使許多學生運動員選擇在年輕時放棄繼續從事體育。本研究訪談來自六項不同運動且長期接受訓練的學生運動員：擊劍、網球、壁球、體操、田徑和游泳。本論文發現同時兼顧學生和運動員這兩個角色通常需要耗費大量的時間，無法探索第二個專業技能，導致學生運動員在職涯轉換方面困難重重，因而許多學生運動員規劃提早退役，這表明政府提供的資源、資金和相關支持不足的現象。損失這些人才豈不是台灣體育產業的悲劇嗎？

關鍵詞：學生運動員、生涯輔導模型、職涯轉換

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Most athletes engage in professional training from primary or secondary school to pursue higher achievements as outstanding players. They sacrifice time and studies that could have been spent on learning, missing out on opportunities to explore their interests. With the diversification of educational pathways different from the past, academically excellent student-athletes now have increased opportunities to enter universities or freely choose their majors. However, due to their past focus on athletic training and competitions, student-athletes often lag behind their peers in academic performance.<sup>1</sup>

Due to their extensive sports training commitments, student-athletes have limited leisure time compared to regular students. This results in reduced participation in extracurricular activities and limited interpersonal interactions with their classmates, depriving them of opportunities for extracurricular learning and social connections.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, the government has shown increasing concern for the career development of athletes, and proposed scholars to encourage athletes' devotion. Most

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<sup>1</sup> Alison M. Gardiner-Shires and Marlaina E. Kloefer, "Examining the Professional Identity Development of Professional Master's Athletic Training Students: A Cohort Study," *Athletic Training Education Journal* 18, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4085/1947-380x-21-085>.

<sup>2</sup> 洪子晴, "臺灣大專學生運動員生涯規劃影響因素之探討," *成大體育學刊* 43, no. 1 (2011).



of the athlete worries about their retirement or getting injured from competition as well as security or abilities they will have to cope with an unpredictable future.

Although many athletes' outstanding achievements in the Asian Games and Olympics bring pride and joy to society, athletes express the hope that the government can help them find employment opportunities. Thus, when the glory of winning medals fades away, athletes need to confront future career issues.

Taiwanese athletes' success in international sporting events contributes to enhancing Taiwan's international image, such as Lin Yun-Ju, who just won the champion of WTT (World Table Tennis). Their achievements garner global attention and pique interest in Taiwan, fostering a positive international image. This, in turn, proves advantageous for attracting international investments, promoting trade cooperation, and strengthening diplomatic relations. Participation in international sports competitions also allows interaction with athletes from other nations. Such exchanges deepen international friendships and facilitate cultural exchange and understanding. Taiwan's athletes represent the nation globally, bringing honor and bridging the gap between Taiwan and other countries. Exceptional Taiwanese athletes and sports stars can serve as international cultural ambassadors, representing Taiwan in various international events. Their success elevates Taiwan's international influence, attracting more global opportunities and attention.

For an athlete, there is no permanent first place. Regardless of their sports achievements, social reputation, or material incentives, any exceptional athlete will eventually retire due to various subjective and objective factors, internally or externally. Athletes' careers are not long-lasting, and those who can compete beyond 40 are rare. According to statistics, the average retirement age for athletes is 33 years old.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the non-athlete population who may retire after the age of 65, athletes usually will face challenges after 30-something because of their physical status, injuries, layoffs, or other unforeseen circumstances leading to retirement. Although some athletes retire voluntarily and they have more time to plan their future careers. In Taiwan, there is more support for athletes who retire due to injuries. Those athletes who choose to retire without achieving good results often receive less recognition from society. It is not surprising to find out that Taiwanese people tend to cheer and praise athletes after they have won medals but rarely acknowledge the challenge that they had received before achieving success.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 王幼萍, “運動員退役轉職出路之研析,” 立法院, September 15, 2021, <https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=6590&pid=211376>.

<sup>4</sup> 曾荃鈺, 場外人生: 運動員送給迷惘的我們 20 種力量(健行, 2022).

## **Motivation**

Since the researcher has previous experience of playing basketball from elementary school, there are some links and background regarding student-athletes. Although there was a temporary pause during junior high school due to academic and family factors, mainly because the parents believed that devoting on sport as a career would be too risky to sustain a living, had no future, and the path ahead would be arduous. However, fueled by the passion for basketball, the researcher continued to participate steadily and consistently in the school team training during high school and university. Throughout this process, the witnesses of the unknown hardships of many student athletes around them, as well as the confusion and difficulties athletes faced in terms of further education and job seeking. Although it is a personal experience that also indicates the common circumstances of Taiwan. Consequently, the researcher decided to research and write on this topic in the university graduation research, hoping to make more people see this profession with respect, so that more individuals would be willing to engage in the sports industry. Hopefully, this research could create a positive effect that will provide reference and implacable alternatives for our young athletes. Only the motivation will not be sufficient, it needs more incentive with encouragement.

## **Research Purpose**

Understanding the challenges and obstacles faced by student-athletes in Taiwan during their career development and identifying potential and effective career counseling strategies to assist them in terms of successful career advancement. The assistance involves exploring the support and resources available to athletes in different professional domains such as higher education, employment, and future development. This research aims to establish a more comprehensive sports education system and career development pathway, enabling athletes to success in various fields. When university are considering help student to graduate with special assistance, the student athletes can also be identified as a different group with different resources in terms of consulting. They are different in career needs.

## **Research Questions**

1. Does Taiwan's sports talent class ruin student-athletes solely to shape successful athletes for a purpose?
2. What do athletes in Taiwan face the main challenges and obstacles during their career development?
3. Is the current model used in career counseling for athletes in Taiwan effective and appropriate when providing advice regarding career development?

## **Contribution**

By studying the career counseling model for athletes, we can explore how to help athletes overcome difficulties in their career development and provide better plan their professional careers. Athletes often face various challenges in their career development, such as short sports careers, insufficient career planning, and career transitions that can affect their professional development and life planning. Therefore, research on the career counseling model for athletes in Taiwan has received increasing attention. Additionally, studying the career counseling model for athletes can enhance their overall professional competence and advancement of career development, foster the international awareness of Taiwanese sporting industry and players.

## **Limits**

Due to the vast scope of the sports industry, it is necessary to consider the research purpose and scope when selecting interview interviewees. In this study, the selection of interviewees is limited by human resources, financial constraints, and time limitations. Therefore, the researcher may only be able to conduct interviews with a limited number of individuals, which could result in limitations in terms of information collection.

## **Delimits**

To increase the diversification of the information collection, a semi-structured approaches are applied when selecting interviewees to reach the best outcome. In this study, the researcher had the opportunity to interview 6 student-athletes included fencing, tennis, squash, gymnastics, athletics, and swimming. The study aims to diversity the actual needs from the aspects of practical players, instead of theoretical finding from the other countries.



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Definition

### Student-athletes

In this research, student-athletes are or were simultaneously with two roles: student and athlete. Take Taiwan as an example; it is a sports player with the first-class University Association (Group A) qualification. In the case of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), it is in Division I, II, and III.<sup>5</sup> The athletes at this level require extended practice to avoid being a distraction.

### Elite Athlete

The athletes who receive guidance are classified into five levels based on their best sports performance according to three principles.<sup>6</sup>

- 1). Guidelines for College Admissions Counseling for Students with Excellent Sports Achievements in Secondary Schools
- 2). Guidelines for Employment Counseling for Outstanding Athletes
- 3). Regulations on the Awarding of National Sports Medals and Scholarships

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<sup>5</sup>陳光宗, "大專學生運動員之運動員認同與生涯發展之研究: 角色邊界之調節效果," (2018)..

<sup>6</sup>張少熙, 蔡虔祿, and 洪聰敏, "協助運動員完善生涯規劃之研究," 臺北市: 行政院體育委員會 (2010).

## **The classification**

Level 1: Athletes who have received the National Sports Medal of Grade 2 or above, including Grade 2 and Grade 3.

Level 2: Athletes who have received the National Sports Medal of Grade 2 or 3.

Level 3: Athletes who qualify for selection.

Level 4: Athletes who qualify for screening.

Level 5: General athletes.

## **Career**

A person's career is the sum of their employment, education, and training experiences that shape their professional development and progression. It encompasses various jobs, positions, and transitions made in response to personal, social, and economic changes. Career is influenced by an individual's interests, values, skills, and goals, as well as labor market trends and social factors. Essentially, a career is a journey that involves making decisions along the way.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>馬文山, "退役羽球男子甲組選手職場生涯規劃之探討," (2010).

## **Career Transition**

The career transition in this study refers to the process of athletes transitioning from their role as athletes to a completely different field of work. It represents a change from one phase to another, and the attitude during this transition may be either voluntary or involuntary, such as retirement or injury, among other factors.<sup>8</sup>

## **Culture Difference**

Different countries have varying policies and levels of support for sports. Through a cultural comparison, we can understand the influence of different policies on athletes and sports and learn from best practices. In Western and Eastern cultures, public perceptions of athletes are distinctly different, which also impacts how athletes are regarded in people's minds.

In Taiwan's education system, sports are often overlooked and underestimated, and Taiwan needs a more comprehensive sports atmosphere and cultural nurturing. The development system for Taiwanese athletes from elementary school to university is a continuous process, especially for those in the sports talent class. They plan which junior high school to attend from elementary school, then continue to which high

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<sup>8</sup>張少熙, 蔡虔祿, and 洪聰敏, "協助運動員完善生涯規劃之研究."

school and university. However, these students may relatively lack environmental stimulation. Upon entering university, many student-athletes face limited opportunities for specialization, indicating a lack of future prospects. Some outstanding student-athletes get injured before becoming national representatives, which is a societal loss. When their sports careers end, this has become a primary consideration for many before embarking on their sports journey, leading to premature retirement. Ultimately, they can only choose voluntary retirement, forced retirement, or transition to other fields. Regardless of their secondary choice, the previous investment goes to waste. Is this system truly beneficial for their lives?

Conversely, in Western countries, people view outstanding athletic performance as a unique talent, and sports are considered a part of tradition and culture. Children are motivated to engage in various sports from a young age and choose their preferred discipline to specialize in, develop their athletic abilities, and cultivate sports habits. In Western countries, athletes often transition from the training field to being regular students. They pursue general majors in college, and many are required to achieve a certain level of academic achievement to be eligible to compete. Therefore, the academic performance of many top athletes abroad is excellent, such as Jeremy Lin. In Western countries, student-athletes first identify as "students" before becoming "athletes."

## Current Situation and Challenges in Taiwan's Sports Industry

Many athletes eagerly anticipated the global competition, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which was postponed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the scarcity of competitions during the pandemic. Although award-winning athletes from their respective countries bask in the applause and adulation, they still face life challenges once the spotlight fades and have to continue their training. Without good results or medals, they struggle to secure resources. During the Olympics, the spotlight is on everyone, with daily news coverage. For ordinary people, it's just a special event, but for athletes, it's a precious one. However, sports have not fully integrated into Taiwanese society. People may only be passionate about sports during major events like the Olympics; not everyone genuinely cares about the sports industry.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, with the right resources and support, athletes can maximize their potential and make meaningful contributions to their communities and society at large. What is Athletic Capital? Are athletes seen as human capital and social capital, or are they simply seen as "athletes"?

Unlike other Western countries, Taiwan's approach to sports development

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<sup>9</sup> 聯合新聞網, “林佳和／當奧運熱潮退燒, 台灣該如何維持運動風潮? | 思想坦克,” 鳴人堂, August 4, 2021, <https://opinion.udn.com/opinion/story/12705/5649689>.

emphasizes smaller-scale individual sports rather than comprehensive development.

However, this approach can be likened to "early specialization" in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Student-athletes often feel that they have no other career options beyond sports.

Although they may excel at a young age, as they grow older, society gradually marginalizes them. In contrast, European and American countries provide adaptable education from a young age and offer elite education after students have grown up, allowing student-athletes to receive education like regular students and have equal opportunities. Taiwanese government invests more in professional sports training during childhood, creating a growing gap when the training becomes intensive and challenging. Many student-athletes prioritize sports over academics, only realizing the difficulties of a career transition when their sports careers end.

## **Comparison of High School Student-Athlete Curriculum Planning**

### **USA**

In the United States, sports are viewed as an important element for nurturing students' character. This perspective is deeply ingrained in the public culture, where people believe that participating in sports can help students build

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Baker, Alexandra Mosher, and Jessica Fraser-Thomas, "Is it too early to condemn early sport specialisation?," *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 55, no. 3 (2021).

confidence, gain a sense of achievement, and prepare them for the challenges of real life.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, sports emphasize teamwork, enabling children to overcome shyness and become part of a team, rather than isolated individuals. This spirit of teamwork helps cultivate students' social skills and teaches them how to succeed through collaboration.

In contrast to some Asian countries, the U.S. education system values not only academic performance but also extracurricular activities, including sports and the arts. This balanced educational approach aids students in holistic development, focusing not only on book knowledge but also on physical and mental cultivation. This diverse educational philosophy is reflected both in schools and in the societal culture, where the public is willing to nurture future professional athletes and provide them with opportunities for career development. Whether in elementary, middle school, or college, each school team has a representative mascot, symbolizing the importance of sports in both the school and the community. This cultural background provides the best platform for the next generation to face setbacks and develop resilience.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of professional sports in the United States, we often see athletes

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<sup>11</sup> Bi-Fon Chang et al., "臺灣與美國大學對於運動資優學生的招募與教育輔導之探討," *興大體育學刊*, no. 22 (2023).

<sup>12</sup> 尚瑞花 and 张新萍, "美国大学“吉祥物”的文化内涵及价值实现——基于符号学原理的解读," *中国学校体育: 高等教育*, no. 2 (2014).

who graduate from prestigious schools and receive higher education. This highlights the complementary relationship between learning and physical exercise. Taking Taiwanese basketball star Jeremy Lin as an example, he made a breakthrough in the NBA and is also a graduate of Harvard University. This demonstrates that in the United States, academics and sports are not mutually exclusive but can be elements that complement each other.

This comprehensive educational approach helps nurture students' diverse abilities and lays a solid foundation for their future careers and personal lives. In contrast, in some Asian countries, academic performance may become the sole focus, overlooking the value of sports and the arts. This cultural difference significantly impacts the curriculum planning of high school student-athletes and may affect their overall development and future career transitions.

## **South Korea**

South Korea's sports high school system ensures that student-athletes receive a regular education while also promoting the country's competitiveness in sports. The government has implemented various measures to manage the academic and training aspects of student-athletes. For example, class hours are scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., ensuring that students receive standard curriculum. In addition,



students also receive specialized sports courses such as sports science, sports injuries, and an overview of sports studies to enhance their expertise.<sup>13</sup>

There are strict regulations for extracurricular training and competitions to balance academics and sports training. Typically, training can only occur after 3 p.m., ensuring students have ample time for learning. Furthermore, there are limits on the number of competitions students can participate in during the semester to ensure they do not neglect their studies.<sup>14</sup> This balanced educational approach contributes to the holistic development of students, emphasizing not only sports but also academic achievement.

Seoul Sports High School is a significant institution within South Korea's sports high school system. This school is funded by the Seoul city government and has been dedicated to cultivating outstanding domestic athletes and coaches since 1971. The school has a rigorous training program, selecting freshmen with athletic potential and providing quality education and training. Students have access to state-of-the-art training facilities, dormitories, nutritious meals, high-quality training equipment, and sportswear—all provided for free. This support helps them achieve remarkable success in sports competitions and instills great pride in South

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<sup>13</sup> 오정환, 노기웅, and 박석, "체육고등학교의 교육과정 및 진로 계발에 관한 고찰," *대한스포츠융합학회지* 20, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>14</sup> 김문수, "2009 개정 교육과정에 따른 체육계열 전문 교과 교육과정에 대한 체육교사의 인식 분석 :The P.E Teacher'S Recognition Analysis about P.E Speciality- Education Curriculum Process," dbpia, 2013, <https://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/detail?nodeId=T13257272>.

Korea.

Sports high schools are prevalent in South Korea, with almost every city having one (refer to Table 1). This reflects South Korean society's high regard for sports and its commitment to providing opportunities for young athletes to develop. This sports high school system has nurtured numerous exceptional athletes for South Korea and played a significant role in international sports competitions.

Table 1. Sports high schools in Korea

City of South Korea		School	
강원	Gangwon	강원체고	Kangwon Physical High School
경기도	Gyeonggido	경기체고	Gyeonggi Physical Education High School
경상남도	Gyeongsang-namdo	경남체고	Gyeongnam Physical Education High School
경상북도	Gyeongsang-bukdo	경북체고	Kyoungbuk Physical Education High School
광주	Gwangju	광주체고	Gwangju Physical Education High School
대구	Daegu	대구체고	Daegu Physical Education High School
대전	Daejeon	대전체고	Daejeon Physical High School
부산	Busan	부산체고	Busan Sport High School
서울	Seoul	서울체고	Seoul Physical Education High School
울산	Ulsan	울산스포츠과학고	Ulsan Sports Science High School

인천	Incheon	인천체고	Incheon Physical Education High School
전라남도	Jeolla-namdo	전남체고	Jeonnam Physical Education High School
전라북도	Jeolla-bukdo	전북체고	Jeonbuk Physical Education High School
충청남도	Chungcheong-namdo	충남체고	Chungnam Physical Education High School
충청북도	Chungcheong-bukdo	충북체고	Chungbuk Physical Education High School
제주도	Jejudo	(제주)남녕고	Namnyeong High School

Source: sorted by researcher.

## Taiwan

Taiwan and South Korea were once known as the Asian Tigers, but over time, they have exhibited a noticeable gap in their international sports performance, particularly over the past decade. This widening gap can be attributed, in part, to the diversified support and education provided to athletes in South Korea, as well as the emphasis on the sports profession.

While Taiwan established high school sports classes in 1986 and introduced relevant curricula, according to researchers' observations, some students opt to enroll in these classes merely to earn extra points for college entrance exams.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> 徐暉雯, “網球績優選手升學時之抉擇因素與生涯規劃\_\_臺灣博碩士論文知識加值系統,” ndltd.ncl.edu.tw, 2022, <https://hdl.handle.net/11296/xb72w5>.

This may lead to the superficial nature of the courses, with students lacking a genuine passion for sports and viewing learning as a means to pass exams.

Furthermore, the school environment in Taiwan may exert pressure on student-athletes. Student-athletes are often segregated from non-athletic students, resulting in social barriers between the two groups. Regular students may have difficulty understanding the challenges faced by athletes, while athletes might feel isolated and confined to a narrow social network.

The daily routine of student-athletes also differs from that of regular students. They invest a substantial amount of time in specialized training, leading to a lifestyle similar to a long-term focus on a single field, resembling that of a professional. This lifestyle may continue for nearly a decade, spanning middle school, high school, and college. Such a daily routine can potentially impact the comprehensive development and future career planning of athletes.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is implemented by adopting a qualitative, semi-structured interview with retired and outstanding athletes in Taiwan. To ensure alignment between research participants and the study objectives, the research focuses on current student-athletes, retired student-athletes, and athletes who have successfully transitioned. The researcher initially defined approximately 15 categories for interview topics. Through friends' referrals, around 20 athletes meeting the research purposes were identified. The researcher further selected at least one athlete from each performance level based on the literature review, resulting in approximately one hour of face-to-face interviews with each participant.

The study encompasses retired athletes who have transitioned into both sports-related and non-sports-related professions, outstanding student-athletes, and retired outstanding student-athletes. Given the recent emphasis on athlete career development, particularly in less popular and niche sports beyond basketball and baseball, this research focuses on athletes from sports such as gymnastics, squash, athletics, fencing, swimming, and tennis, with one representative per sport, totaling six participants (refer to Table 2).

To gain a deeper understanding of the differences in athlete career planning between domestic and international contexts, the researcher worked as staff for 20 days at the William Jones Cup International Basketball Tournament. While the interview content from this experience is not included in the thesis due to its scattered nature, it significantly contributed to shaping the foundational ideas of this thesis.

The study aims to identify the challenges athletes face after retiring from professional sports, how they seek assistance, and the key factors influencing career adaptation. It also explores whether student-athletes require distinct career counseling compared to general students and investigates the feasibility of sports as a permanent career.

Table 2. Interviewee list

<b>NO.</b>	<b>Sports</b>	<b>Athlete Seniority years</b>	<b>Retirement Age</b>	<b>Current Age</b>	<b>National Representative</b>	<b>Best Achievements</b>
A	Gymnastic	13	(Planning to retire at 22)	21	Y(Before)	2017 Asian Gymnastics Championships (No.3) National High School Games (Horizontal bar No.1 for 5 years)
B	Squash	9	(Planning to retire at 30)	21	Y(Now)	24 Championships in 5 years
C	Fencing	7	20	21	Y(Before)	U17 National Champion
D	Swimming	10	19	22	N	National High School Games (50-meter Breaststroke No.2)
E	Tennis	13	22	22	N	National High School Games (團體 No.2)
F	Athletics	6	18	29	N	National High School Games (110-meter Hurdles No.1)

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis includes the Motivation for Involvement in Sports, whether you consider "this sport" as a profession, Exploring a Second Specialty, Advice and Opinions from existing career counseling for athletes, and the Summary and Implication for the end.

The questions about why athletes get into sports and whether they see it as a career can tell us if Taiwan's sports talent classes mainly aim to create successful athletes. Typically, athletes are chosen for these classes due to their talent, and very few begin formal training just because they liked the sport initially.

*"At first, I didn't have any ideas; I joined in the third grade of elementary school based on my teacher's recommendation, so I got to experience this sport." – Interviewee A*

*"My elementary school teacher saw my potential and recommended that I join this sport." – Interviewee D&F*

*"I originally just joined the club, and the teacher recommended that I spend more time practicing." – Interviewee C*

*"My mom was a national athlete. When I saw her playing, I wanted to become a player like her." – Interviewee B*



Can sports be considered a profession? The opinions of athletes in popular and less popular sports are very different. Many athletes, coaches, sports administrators, and professionals in related fields make a living through their involvement in sports. This can include competitive athletes who earn salaries, sponsorships, and prizes, coaches and trainers employed by teams or organizations, sports medicine professionals, sports journalists, and many others who work in the sports industry. However, it's important to note that a career in sports can be highly competitive and often requires a great deal of dedication, training, and skill to succeed. In today's Taiwan, we should focus on maintaining an excellent professional support system while gradually increasing public interest in sports events. This will help attract more talented domestic and foreign athletes to participate in sports activities, ultimately enhancing the skills of domestic players.

*"No, I know it will end soon, and there is no future for this sport in Taiwan." – Interviewee C*

*"No, this sport is a niche in Taiwan and lacks resources." – Interviewee A*

*"Yes, I can become a coach, and there is more demand than other sports." – Interviewee D&E*

*"Yes, but it can only be considered a specialization." – Interviewee F*

*"Yes, even if I am no longer an athlete, I can still become a referee or a technical committee member." – Interviewee B*

To achieve success in sports, they need to invest a substantial amount of time in training and participating in competitions. This includes daily physical conditioning, technical training, and engaging in competitions. This makes it challenging for athletes to find sufficient time to explore career options, receive career counseling, or cultivate other vocational skills. Student-athletes must exert significant effort to balance their academics, training, and personal lives, which can have a negative impact on their physical and mental well-being as they often lack the time for rest and relaxation. This also affects their career development because a balanced life is the foundation for achieving success in their careers.

*"Exploring a Second Specialty is a luxury idea." Almost all of my time outside of classes is spent practicing, so there's no extra time or energy to try something else."*

all interviewees unanimously said in one voice.

In Taiwan's social and cultural context, academic pursuits are often prioritized over sports, and many parents do not fully support their children's wholehearted engagement in athletic practices. This significantly impacts athletes' career choices and perceptions, including the prevailing values and stereotypes associated with sports professions. There exists a stereotype in the public perception of athletes as

physically strong but intellectually lacking, and a common belief that pursuing a career in sports leads to a bleak future. People generally have limited understanding of what it means to be an athlete, and changing these cultural attitudes toward athletes will require sustained efforts over the long term.

### **Advice and opinions from existing career counseling for athletes.**

All the interviewees have received career counseling primarily from their coaches, which means they can only reference immediate and successful transitions within their profession. As student-athletes, their career aspirations are often quite narrow, typically revolving around becoming a professional athlete, coach, or technical committee member. They have limited exposure to successful career transitions in other fields.

*"Don't give up on your education; plan for life after retirement in advance." – Interviewee B&F*

*"I believe that having one-on-one career counseling sessions with a school counselor during my high school years would have been beneficial for my career planning." – Interviewee A&C&D&E*

The responses highlight the need for more comprehensive career counseling options for student-athletes, including exposure to a wider range of post-sports career possibilities and an emphasis on education and future planning. This can help athletes make more informed decisions and prepare for life beyond their athletic careers.

Based on data analysis, the following four challenges and difficulties faced by student-athletes can be summarized:

**1.Sports Talent Class System:**

The equal educational system needs to be reexamined and reevaluated, particularly in the context of sports talent class systems.

**2.Premature Specialization and the Loss of Life Exploration:**

The overemphasis on early professionalization often results in young athletes missing out on the opportunity to explore other aspects of life.

**3.Forced Retirement for Athletes without Achievements:**

Athletes are sometimes compelled to retire if they fail to achieve notable results, which can be detrimental to their career prospects.

**4.Student-Athletes as Tools, Lacking Social Morality:**

Student-athletes are sometimes perceived as mere tools rather than individuals with a sense of social responsibility and morality.

## CONCLUSION

Based on research, the surveyed athletes have expressed their need for career counseling assistance during their sports careers. Many athletes lack secondary specialties outside of their sport, as certain sports demand long-term dedication and intense focus to achieve success. We can observe that young Taiwanese athletes often perform exceptionally in international competitions but tend to fade out during their peak years. Does Taiwan's sports system really "win from the beginning"? The career development issues of student-athletes are becoming increasingly severe. The voluntary early retirement of elite athletes in Taiwan is not just a personal loss but also a loss for the nation. It is one of the main reasons preventing Taiwan from making significant strides on the international stage.<sup>16</sup>

The equal educational system needs to be reexamined, particularly in the context of the sports talent class system. The sports class system might be preventing students from receiving a homogeneous education. Excessive early professionalization deprives students of the opportunity to explore life. When they don't achieve results on the field, they are forced into retirement. Does society view student-athletes as mere tools, lacking social morality?

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<sup>16</sup> 馬文山, "退役羽球男子甲組選手職場生涯規劃之探討."

Sports help us gain recognition on the international stage, making the world more aware of Taiwan. However, can we retain this talent? Present-day Taiwan should prioritize the overall development of the sports industry rather than just focusing on immediate sporting performance, avoiding short-sightedness. The next generation will surpass the previous one, sports records will eventually be broken, but the injuries and careers of athletes will stay with them for life.

Finally, there will never be a 100% perfect educational system worldwide, but we must continually strive for improvement. The success or failure of an educational environment is not solely dependent on individual successes within that system. Regardless of how reform is carried out, there will always be high achievers and individuals who flourish within any given system. Therefore, the quality of an education system should be measured by whether it can ensure that more children's futures are not sacrificed within that system.

## SUGGESTION

While the government has implemented relevant policies, the lack of oversight agencies often results in poor execution. If government-established oversight bodies could ensure the proper implementation of policies, the professional counseling mechanism would become more effective and no longer remain merely nominal. If professional athletes are seen as a profession, should they also establish industry unions to safeguard their basic rights? Taiwan lacks comprehensive athlete unions, with unions existing only for basketball, baseball, women's soccer, and Taipei sports coaches. Despite the shortcomings in this field, athletes need to advocate for and support each other proactively.

The essence of student-athletes is first the student, then the athlete.<sup>17</sup> They derive their identity from being both students and athletes, and even during the peak of their athletic careers, they must evaluate their current situation and environment to plan for their future development. The government and schools should not use the counseling mechanisms designed for regular students to assist them but should leverage the advantages of their combined student-athlete roles. Therefore, providing pre-professional training centers specifically designed for student-athletes can help

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<sup>17</sup> 黃詩茹, “追求頂尖之後, 他們陪運動員繼續逐夢,” 人文·島嶼, June 24, 2020, <https://humanityisland.nccu.edu.tw/meiyenchen/>.

them utilize their time outside of their specialized fields. Student-athletes can experience diversified growth and learning, creating an environment where they can easily explore other areas.



## APPENDIX

### 受訪者基本資料填寫

姓名：

主專業項目：

副專業項目(可填無)：

目前年齡：

目前的工作：

何時開始接觸此專業項目：

何時開始接受正式訓練：

學校教育歷程：

目前運動生涯最佳成就：

退役年紀(卸下運動員身份)：

是否曾為國家代表隊的選手：

## 訪談同意書

敬啟者：

您好，非常感謝您百忙之中撥冗接受本次訪談。本次訪談之目的為了解臺灣運動員在職涯發展過程中所面臨的挑戰和障礙，我們誠摯希望能藉由此論文研究找出可能的生涯輔導策略，以協助運動員在職涯發展中順利發展。為利資料整理與分析，希望您同意研究者於訪談過程中錄音。錄音內容僅作為研究者分析資料與撰寫論文之用。基於保護受訪者之緣故，您的姓名將於後續資料整理及呈現中一律以代碼取代。我將謹守研究倫理，僅供學術研究，誠摯邀請您一起參與這份論文的研究工作。

再次謝謝您的協助！您的參與將使本研究更加具有建設性及真實性，期許能有助精進於日後運動員之教育政策與福祉的提升。

敬祝

平安喜樂，心想事成

文藻外語大學 國際事務系 王柏雯 謹誌

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本人同意接受訪談過程中錄音，訪談內容限於研究相關用途。

沒問題，本人願意接受訪談

很抱歉，本人不願意接受訪談

受訪者（簽名）\_\_\_\_\_。

日期：\_\_\_\_\_年\_\_\_\_\_月\_\_\_\_\_日



## 訪談大綱

- 一、請問您投入「此專業運動」的動機為何？
  - 二、「此專業運動」的平均退役年齡大概在幾歲？/您幾歲退役&原因？您持續從事的原因？
  - 三、請問您是否有將「此專業運動」視為一個職業？
  - 四、通常「此專業運動」的訓練時間為何？從幾歲開始接受？
  - 五、請問您是否擁有除了運動以外的第二專長？
  - 六、除了政府提供的資源，您是否主動參與其他管道的學習？  
(如：讀書會、線上課程、培訓等等)/若有，幫助為何？若無，為何沒有？
  - 七、家人朋友是否曾經對你有既定的刻板印象？(如：不會讀書才運動、選手賽場上光鮮亮麗、奪牌獎金用一生等等)(如有，請詳述)
  - 八、您認為在台灣職業運動員的未來發展為何？
  - 九、您認為從運動場上退役後能成功/不成功轉換生涯因素有什麼？
  - 十、針對現在既有的運動員生涯輔導，您有什麼建議與看法？
- IF 是國手：成為國手前與成為國手後，有什麼差異嗎？

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