



# How should elite students balance demands of competitive sport and academic careers?



A concept for the evaluation of the effects of gradual examinations in elite sport schools – The “Additives Abitur”

## 1. Introduction

Elite student athletes in Germany (and in Europe general) have to manage demands of school education with high-performance athletic training. To reduce the difficulties of balancing those dual careers<sup>1, 2</sup>, the German conference of education introduced a pilot project with the title ‘Additives Abitur’ at one of the elite sports schools (ESS). The student athletes at this ESS got the opportunity to expand their time at school to obtain a university entrance qualification. Moreover, they can split the final examinations into smaller parts and pass it prematurely to complete a gradual additive examination (‘Additives Abitur’; AA). However, there are no empirical findings on this new pilot project. A research project funded by the Federal Institute of Sport Science and the Ministry of Education in the state of Brandenburg will evaluate the effects of this specific institutional solution.

## 2. Support Offers at Elite Sports Schools (ESS)

At ESS a multitude of offers to support dual careers are brought to action parallel. It unites the desire to provide more freedom for especially talented and successful athletes in upper secondary levels to achieve a career in high-performance sports, without lessening their chances of a high-quality educational attainment. The specific aims of the individual offers are partly very different. Normally the individual supporting offers intertwine conceptually, build on one another or complement one another. An example for this is the school experiment “Additives Abitur” which is carried out since 2011 at the sports school in Potsdam. This experiment contains the possibility to extend the school time in the upper secondary level and to expand the opportunity to divide the exams on several school years

### Expectations of Effect

It is assumed that sport students who use the AA benefit from it in several departments.

### Department compatibility of school and high-performance sports

- Higher subjective satisfaction with the compatibility

### Department school

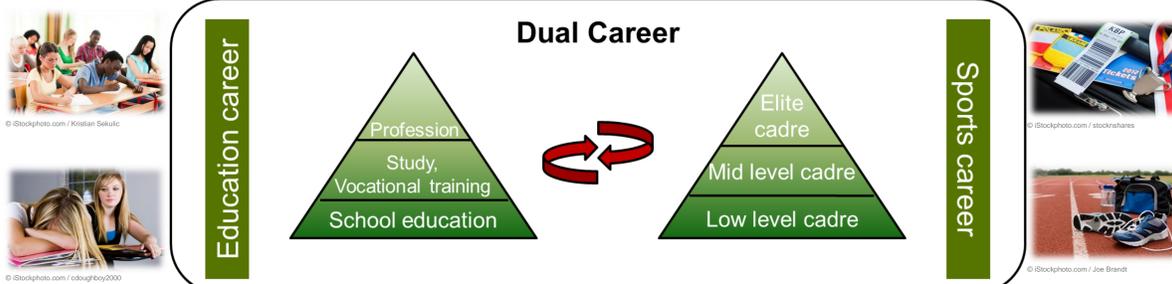
- more time and energy to prepare for the exams
- rarer failure in exams, better grades
- more positive performance development in examination subject
- comparable performance development with sportive inconspicuous students at regular schools

### Department high-performance sports

- more time for training and competitions
- better performances and achievements in sports
- less dropouts

### Department psychosocial health

- lower chronic stress experience, higher well-being



## 3. Scientific Evaluation

### Research Questions

- How do the providers and users perceive and assess the additive examination ?
- Which effects does the utilization of the additive examination have on the stress experience as well as the performances in school and sports?
- How could the AA be made even more efficient and effective?

### Study Design

The evaluation shall be realized with a combined mixed method longitudinal study.<sup>3</sup> Data from different groups of students and other persons will be analyzed.

### Qualitative Study

**Focus:** subjective perception and assessment of supporting offers

**Design:** cross- and longitudinal section (2016-2017)

**Survey instruments:** structured, problem-focused interviews

#### Participants:

- (1) ESS-personnel: trainer, teacher, school management
- (2) High-performance athletes in upper secondary level

#### Data preparation and evaluation:

- Interview transcription
- Qualitative content analysis
- Case-by-case analysis and typological analysis



### Quantitative Study

**Focus:** objective effect of the offering

**Design:** cross- and longitudinal section (2016-2017)

**Survey instruments:** questionnaire, school tests

#### Participants:

- (1) Elite athletes in ESS using AA
- (2) Elite athletes in ESS without using AA
- (3) Elite athletes in regular schools
- (4) Non-elite athletes in regular schools

#### Data preparation and evaluation:

- Creation of the comparability of groups with *Propensity Score Matching* processes<sup>4</sup>
- Inferential-statistical analyses with RM-AN(C)OVA



## 4. Expected Results

With the evaluation project current research desiderates are processed. On the base of the qualitative and quantitative data to be raised, the potentials for further development of the supporting offers are worked out. Furthermore, the analysis of the general and offer-specific efficacy of supporting offers is the central in the data evaluation. For this purpose the results of the tests and the self-report of persons of different subsamples (among others) are compared. The results should enable a rational discussion concerning questions of further development and provision of supporting offers at ESS. Especially the school experiment “Additives Abitur” that is yet unique in Germany, has to be examined. In the case of a successful evaluation of this experiment, the possibility for implementing this program at other ESS-locations has to be discussed.

## References

- 1 Brettschneider, W.-D. (1999). Risks and Opportunities: Adolescents in Top-Level Sport - Growing Up with the Pressures of School and Training. *European Physical Education Review*, 5 (2), 121-133.
- 2 Borggreve, C., & Cachay, K. (2012). “Dual Careers”: The Structural Coupling of Elite Sport and School Exemplified by the German Verbundsysteme. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 9 (1+2), 57-80.
- 3 Mertens, D.M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- 4 Thoemmes, F., & Kim, E. S. (2011). A Systematic Review of Propensity Score Methods in the Social Sciences. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 46, 90-118.