



**University of
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Professional athletes at university: An analysis of gendered opportunities and inequalities in Switzerland

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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DEDICATION

To my late grandmothers Maria & Maria.

I hope you are proud of me.

I love you.

THANK YOU...

... to all the interviewees that have taken the time out of their busy schedule to answer my questions. Without you this work would have never been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This Master thesis explores the chances of living solely from professional sport in Switzerland and interprets the experiences of Swiss professional athletes who have to combine their sport career to an academic one in order to provide themselves a living post-professional sport.

This case study is inspired by Connell's (1987) theorization of hegemonic masculinity. It analyses the influence that both the categorization of sport and the Swiss sport and education systems can have over the compatibility between sport career and academic career.

Content analysis of 16 individual interviews with Swiss professional athlete-students indicate that the chances of make a living solely out of professional sport would be related to two factors. The first being the mentality and the culture of a nation, which influences institutional investments in sport. Secondly, the level of media attention reserved to a sport. As a result I propose the following classification of sport: "higher media attention sport" and "lower media attention sport". Lower media attention sport seem to be characterized in Switzerland by a financial unsustainability, which leads professional athletes to have to combine their sport career with an academic career. Multiple degrees of compatibility between the two careers have been identified and the support given seems to be sport-prone, result-prone, person-prone and institute-prone leading to a series of challenges for professional athlete-student. It also allows an individual and unique experience in the combination of the two. Suggestions for an improvement of the current Swiss system are presented.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHF: Swiss Francs

DDPS: Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

EDK, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education

FOSPO: Federal Office for Sport

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association

SERI: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation

SPLISS: Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success

SUSF: Swiss University Sport Federation

USA: United States of America

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SPORT & SOCIETY: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sport is one of the oldest practices that shapes society. The first historical traces of sport can be found in ancient Greece (Fuller, 2018: 5). At the time, athletics was very significant for men because it had its central role in honouring gods in religious rituals (Spears, 1984: 46). The epitome of the sporting events were the Ancient Olympic Games, which took place in Olympia every four years (supposedly) between 776 BCE and 394 AD (Fuller, 2018: 5) and were a men-only event (ibidem). Even if the Greek society was characterized by different roles between the two genders, in which men were involved in political decision-making (Klein, 2002: 143) and women's primary roles included childbearing and education of the children(s), the care of the husband and the management of the household" (Sterk and Knoppers, 2009: 69; Spears, 1984: 33) and where "masculinity" was (and might be argued, still is) characterised by hardness, muscularity, toughness (Klein, 2002:143; Coakley, 2015: 470), while "femininity" was represented by softness, lack of muscularity, docility (Klein, 2002:143), nurturance and servitude (Coakley, 2015: 470) there is a record also of competition for women: the Heraean Games¹. They took place every four years (O'Brien & Robertson, 2010: 25) (supposedly) starting around 10000 BCE (O'Brien & Robertson, 2010: 25).

However, even if both men and women had access to sport, it has been argued that where an unequal treatment and unequal access to sport was granted to men and women. Sport has been long discussed in the literature as based on an ideal of masculinity (Ross and Shinew, 2008; Anderson, 2009; Bryson, 1987; Cszima et al. 1988; Messner 1988; Ferez, 2012) and predominately as a male domain (Ross and Shinew, 2008; Bryson 1987; Cszima et al. 1988). Consequently, in the literature the gender-appropriateness of sports and the consequences, which had (and it could be argued still has) on sport participation and sport categorization, has been long discussed. An example in this sense could be the Modern Olympic Game. Women could not participate in the first Modern Olympic Game, which took place in 1896 in Athens (Fuller, 2008: 5). Even though they could participate in the next Modern Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, they were allowed to compete only in golf, tennis (De Frantz: 1997: 18) rowing and equestrian events (Fuller, 2018: 5); sports that at the time were considered "feminine" enough for women to practice (ibidem). Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the Modern Olympics was against the idea of women competing in the Olympics and he thought that the role of women in sport should be restricted to cheering and applauding the winning men (Fuller, 2018: 5). To corroborate his idea of the Olympics as a

¹ The games were named after the Greek Goddess Hera (O'Brien & Robertson, 2010: 25).

only male-event, he argued that “no matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks. Her nerves rule her muscles, nature wanted it that way.” (De Coubertin, 1912, cited by Fuller, 2018: 5). This concept expressed by De Coubertin reflects the predominant ideology of the time: physical activity for women was legitimised by a central preoccupation with the preservation and development of (female) reproductive organs (Ferez, 2012: 275). Many doctors showed concern about the impact of this type of activity on women’s biological reproductive function. Of great relevance was the fact that women had to protect their bodies so that they could dedicate themselves to their family duties (De Frantz: 1997: 19). Consequently, even if at that time the access to sport for women was accepted, it might be considered limited compared to the mens’ (Fuller, 2018: 5; Spears, 1984: 46). The access to sport for women seems to have increased, gender appropriateness of sports and sport categorization might still be present in the societal construct of sport (Ross and Shinew, 2008: 40).

1.2 THE SWISS CONTEXT & RESEARCH QUESTION

At the end of the nineteenth century in Switzerland the army was responsible for sport (Bayle, 2017: 263). At the time it was seen as the activity that allowed an implementation in the personal well-being and was considered to be the tool to ensure honourable performances in international competitions (Bayle, 2017: 263). It is believed that the strategy of the government policy in relation to sport is one of the reasons, which lead Switzerland to result as a sport inclined country (ibidem), where a great part of the population engages weekly in sport activities. In the study “Swiss Sport 2014”² the results showed that 69% of the population affirms to practice sport weekly³ (FOSPO, 2014: 7). Comparing international and European results with Swiss results, the latter results in a very sport inclined nation, scoring the second place in the ranking; second only to Sweden and followed by Denmark and Finland (ibidem).

In Switzerland, professional sport is supported on multiple levels and by multiple stakeholders such as cantonal and federal governments, sport federations and private associations (Lamprecht, 2018: 65). The FOSPO (Federal Office of Sport) itself acknowledges the importance and the significance that professional sport has in Switzerland, by recognizing that it has both a social and economic value (FOSPO, 2016c: 19). In fact, it claims that professional sport must be promoted and supported because it enhances the

² Those are currently the most updated data available about sport in CH. The next federal study about sport is previewed to e released in 2020 (Swiss Sport Observatory, 2018).

³ 44% do it more than once a week (overall three or more hours a week), 17% at least once a week (two or more hours a week), 8% at least once a week (FOSPO, 2014b: 7).

nation's social cohesion and reinforces the national identity (FOSPO, 2016c: 5). In addition, it claims that it implements the development of sport, promotes a healthy lifestyle and gives the chance to young people to discover themselves and to develop their talents. The FOSPO (Federal Office of Sport) also reasons that it grants an international platform to showcase the prestige of the nation by being successful and thus grant great publicity for the nation itself (FOSPO, 2016c: 5).

Even though professional sport seems to have social and economical value and importance for the nation, the reality, which many professional athletes are facing in Switzerland (as well as in other countries), is that it is very hard to be sufficiently financially rewarded to be able to pursue sport as "lifetime job", and to living out of it (Aquilina, 2013: 374). It has been debated that only by playing the more popular sports in Switzerland, such as (men's) soccer, skiing or (men's) ice hockey (Bayle, 2017: 266), it is possible to make a living from sport, because they all play a major role in the national identity and culture (ibidem). Statistics specifically about the level of income for professional athletes in Switzerland are not available. The only statistical data I found are related to an international study conducted in 2015 (SPLISS 2.0). In this study, only one third of the participating Swiss professional athletes could actually focus exclusively on their sport career (De Bosscher, V. et al, 2015: 220). The other two halves had to combine their sporting career either with a job career or with an academic one (FOSPO, 2016c: 24-25) to be able to earn a living during and after their chosen (professional) sport career. It can be consequently argued that "top-performance athlete" can not be considered as "lifetime job" and that the actual profession begins only once the professional sport career is over (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003: 259). This would imply that Swiss athletes must conduct a dual career, in which they combine their sporting career either with an academic one to be prepared for their future "lifetime job", or by getting a job that could potentially become their "lifetime job" to grant themselves a living after professional sport.

Having to combine these two careers could be very demanding for an athlete-student and without the necessary support, they could potentially be prevented from achieving success both in sport and in their second career chosen (between study and job). In this sense the efficiency of the Swiss system would be vital for both the nation and the athlete-student to be able to grant success to both parts. Studies about both the compatibility between a professional sport career and a job or academic career in Switzerland have been not found. Following this potential gap in the literature, due to the difficult sustainability of being a professional athlete, I have considered necessary and relevant more research related to this phenomenon. More in detail, in this case study I analyse the compatibility between the

sporting career and the academic one. Unfortunately, due to the nature of this research it was not possible to research both and a choice had to be made.

Even though it appears that a great number of athletes study as well as competing in sport, in Switzerland there are currently no standardized rules that regulate the combination between the two careers leading to a difference of treatment of professional athletes-students in both the tertiary institutes and the sport federations (De Bosscher, V. et al, 2015: 220). It would seem that it is only recently that the importance of being able to offer the athletes the chance to build a future, thanks to and outside of professional sport, has started to be taken into consideration from the Swiss stakeholders who are involved. In 2017, Swiss Olympic has signed an agreement with Swiss Universities and created a program called "Professional sport & studies" (FISU, 2017) with the objective of developing models for part-time studies in as many programs as possible (ibidem). Appointed for the organisation and the accomplishment of these objectives has been the SUSF (Swiss University Sport Federation). I believe that research in this direction is needed to allow a better understanding of the current Swiss sport and education system and to lead to an improvement of the legislations and to the compatibility of the two careers so that it can be possible for both the Swiss system and the athletes to reap the benefits from the systems.

In my research I consider as "professional athlete"⁴ the athletes who are owners of a certain number of "Swiss Olympic Card"⁵. Namely I took into consideration the "Swiss Olympic Card Gold"⁶, the "Swiss Olympic Card Silver"⁷, the "Swiss Olympic Card Bronze"⁸ or the "Swiss Olympic Card Elite"⁹. These different types of cards are given to Swiss athletes based on

⁴ Referred in this work also as top-performance athletes.

⁵ Multiple types of Swiss Olympic Card exist (in order of importance from the lowest level to the higher): "Swiss Olympic Card Talent Local", "Swiss Olympic Card Talent Regional", "Swiss Olympic Card National", "Swiss Olympic Card Elite", "Swiss Olympic Card Bronze", "Swiss Olympic Card Silver", "Swiss Olympic Card Gold" (Swiss Olympic, 2017)

⁶ The „Swiss Olympic Gold Card“ is normally given to athletes that have at least a ranking in the top 3 of the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, the World Championships or that have won at an European Championship (Swiss Olympic; SUSF, 2016).

⁷ The „Swiss Olympic Silver Card“ is normally given to athletes that have a ranking in the top 8 at the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, the World Championships, or in the top 8 of the World Ranking or top 6 at the European Championships. For team-sports the teams have to class in the first quarter of the ranking or in the first quarter of the ranking of the nations that have taken part in the most important international competitions (cf. competition cited above) (Swiss Olympic, 2017; SUSF, 2016).

⁸ The „Swiss Olympic Bronze Card“ is normally given to athletes with international potential that have won a medal at the European Championships, that are ranked in the top 16 at the Junior World Championship or ranked in the top 16 of the World Ranking. They also could be ranked in the top 12 of the Junior European Championship (Swiss Olympic, 2017; SUSF, 2016:).

⁹ The „Swiss Olympic Elite Card“ is normally given to athletes that are active in the elite national teams (Swiss Olympic, 2017; SUSF, 2016).

their results and the level in which they are competing (national or international) and is valid for two years (Swiss Olympic, 2017; SUSF, 2015). I employed the term “(professional) athlete-student” to identify the population of this research: individuals who are currently studying at a university in Switzerland who are at the same time cardholders of a Swiss Olympic Card. In relation to this point it is important to note, that in this master thesis as “Swiss universities” I consider not only universities per-se but all the institutes that are either accredited or recognised as Swiss Higher Education Institutes according to the “Higher Education Funding and Coordination Act” (HEdA), meaning that also Universities of Applied Sciences, University of Teacher Education have been taken into consideration (cf. Annex 01 – Recognised or Accredited Swiss Higher Education Institutions) (Swiss Universities, 2016).

As it has been claimed before, sport seems to be built on a gender constructed structure (Anderson, 2010: 9) and this could contribute to reinforce male-dominant social and economic hierarchies (Katz, 1996: 102). Starting from this idea, the theoretical approach of the research is based on the concept of hegemonic masculinity of Connell. In this case study I have analysed in what ways the Swiss tertiary education system and the Swiss sports institutions support the (fe)male professional athletes who are at the same time also students at a Swiss university. The research questions of this case study are:

How do female and male professional athletes who are also students perceive the support of the Swiss tertiary education system and of the Swiss sport system during their dual careers?

To what extent do the experiences of the professional athletes-students reflect gender hierarchies?

What do the female and male professional athletes-students perceive as the main challenges in combining their dual careers as athletes and students?

1.3 SPORT & EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN SWITZERLAND

A brief insight on the role and importance of sport in Switzerland and its evolution has been given in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, it is important to briefly explain how the sport system and the education system work in Switzerland, so that during the remaining segments of the research it will be possible to understand the stakeholders taken into consideration and the role they play in the intricate system. It will also allow a better understanding of the stakeholders involved as well as all the observations and conclusions that are going to be made. This chapter will allow a better understanding of the context of this research.

1.3.1 THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Swiss education system can be divided into four consecutive levels: primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary (SERI, 2006: 11). Education in Switzerland is a government responsibility, meaning that the cantonal and the federal government have the responsibility to organize it from the very beginning of compulsory education to the tertiary level (EDK, 2018). Compulsory education¹⁰ is mostly regulated at cantonal level, in fact, between the twenty-six cantons there are differences on how the education system is organized. Starting from secondary level II (also called upper-secondary), education is non-compulsory and entails various types of education (SERI, 2006: 13): either general education schools such as specialized schools (Specialized Baccalaureate) and baccalaureate schools (Baccalaureate); or vocational education and training (apprenticeship) (Federal Vocational Baccalaureate) (SERI, 2006: 13; Swiss Universities, 2019; EDK, 2018). The tertiary level entails Universities and Federal Institutes of Technology, Universities of Teacher Education, Universities of Applied Sciences, Colleges of Higher Education (SERI, 2006: 13; EDK, 2018). For example in the tertiary education level, the federal authorities are in charge of the two Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (EDK, 2018). The responsibility of the Confederation at the non-compulsory education level is bigger compared to their responsibility to a compulsory level (EDK, 2018), in fact, usually inter-cantonal and national legislations regulate the education at a post-compulsory education level (cf. Annex 02 – Swiss Education System).

The tertiary education is organized in a very complex and intricate system. Giving a full description in this case study would be impossible; however, it is important to take into consideration the administrative departments of the various levels of the organizational system of a Swiss University. This would grant a better understanding of the results presented in the research. Every Swiss tertiary institute has a Student Administration Office, which is mostly responsible for the enrolment of every student at the institute itself (UZH, 2018a). A faculty then has an Academic Advisor Service that can be contacted in case of questions about the degree courses and an Office of Student Affairs, which is mostly responsible for the recognition of credits and for questions related to exams (UZH, 2018b) and has then its own Dean's Office, which is responsible for the administration (UZH, 2018c). A Faculty is then organized by departments (UZH, 2018d).

¹⁰ The length of the compulsory education in Switzerland varies from canton to canton and includes the primary level (one or two years of kindergarten and a first learning cycle of primary school from four to six years, for a total of eight – nine years) and lower secondary level (secondary level I) takes three or four years (SERI, 2006; EDK, 2018).

1.3.2 THE SWISS PROFESSIONAL SPORT SYSTEM SWITZERLAND

As the Swiss education system, the Swiss sport system as the Swiss education system, is characterized by a complex structure. A great number of stakeholders are involved to guarantee a great number of sporting activities and sports facilities to the population for both leisure and professional sport (FOSPO, 2016c).

In being the topic of this research the compatibility between professional sport and tertiary studies (in Switzerland), not all the stakeholders of the Swiss sport systems have been taken into consideration and analysed. In this research I examine the role of the governmental/public stakeholders as Confederation, cantons and municipalities, as well as private ones such as Swiss Olympic and the association “Schweizer Sporthilfe” (cf. Diagram 1 - Professional sport and tertiary education in Switzerland).

1.3.2.1 GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS

As before mentioned, in the case of professional sport in Switzerland, as governmental/public stakeholders are involved: The Confederation, the cantons and the municipalities. Each one has its own specific role at their level of the structure but they all share the responsibility of promoting sport (Bayle, 2017: 266). In greater detail, at national level policies are determined by the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), which are then put into effect by the Federal Office for Sport (FOSPO, 2017: 1). The institution is responsible for the promotion of sport (and physical activity) for the population (of all ages and at any level of practice) at the national and international level, for the support of professional sport and is also responsible for the fight against violence and doping in sport (ibidem). The Confederations' primary role is to support and promote sport and not to manage it. In fact, the Confederation has service contracts with each sport federations that are supervised by Swiss Olympic (ibidem).

The cantons are responsible for the promotion and the funding of sports (and physical activity) at the cantonal level and they supervise sport in school and manage the cantonal Youth + Sport programs (Bayle, 2017: 275). It is the duty of the municipalities to promote and fund sport (and physical activity) at municipal-level (FOSPO, 2016c: 21). Municipalities also support local clubs with subsidies and they contribute on the financing of sport infrastructures (Bayle, 2017: 275).

1.3.2.2 NON-GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS

Swiss Olympic is appointed by the Confederation for the management of the professional sport in Switzerland (Bayle, 2017: 263) and it is both the National Olympic Committee and the umbrella organisation that represents the Swiss sport federations for both Olympic and non-Olympic sports (Bayle, 2017: 269). To Swiss Olympic are affiliated all the 84 national federations and more than 20,000 sport clubs (FOSPO, 2016c: 13) with more than 1.6 million members (Bayle, 2017: 270) and their final aim is the long-term success at a regional, national and international level of their athletes (FOSPO, 2016c: 13; Bayle, 2017).

The amount of money that each federation receives from Swiss Olympic depends on the category of the sport itself in the categorization provided by Swiss Olympic (Bayle, 2017: 276). More in detail, five categories are defined by the following criteria,(Swiss Olympic, 2017: 3-9). To every criterion (and sub-criterion), points are assigned (Swiss Olympic, 2017: 3):

1. Promotion of professional sport (25 points max¹¹)
 - a. Olympic games (5 points max): where the best results at the Olympic games of the current Olympic cycle are taken into consideration
 - b. World championships and European Championships (5 points max): where the best results at the Elite World Championships or the Elite European Championships of the current Olympic cycle are taken into consideration
 - c. Potential for the next Olympic cycle (5 points max): where the potential of an Olympic sport in sight of the next Olympic games or the potential of a non-Olympic sport in sight of the next Elite World Championships or the Elite European Championships is taken into consideration
 - d. Success of the talent in relation to the international results (4 points max): where the results Juniors-category at the at the Junior World Championships or the Junior European Championships of the current Olympic cycle are taken into consideration
 - e. Concept of promotion of the single professional sport (6 points max): where the measures are applied for the development and the promotion of a sport during the current Olympic cycle and are evaluated on their quality, efficiency and durability.
2. Importance of the sport (12 points max)
 - a. International spread (3 points max): where the number of the active nations at the Olympic Games, World Championships, European Championships

¹¹ This indicates the max of points, which can be assigned to every (sub -)criterion.

- b. National spread (4 points max): where the number of people practicing the sport at a national level is taken into consideration
- c. Economic and media importance (3 points max): where if a sport is among the 20 sports creating the highest revenues for the Confederation and if it is among the 40 sports with the largest media attention in Switzerland is taken into consideration
- d. Major sport events (2 points max): where it is taken into consideration if the sport had a European Championships, a World Championship in the last Olympic cycle or is going to have one in the next Olympic cycle which is/was financially supported by Swiss Olympic with at least 20'000 CHF.

The category in which a sport is assigned goes from one to five, with one being the category to receive the largest amount of funding and five the least, and are determined by the total points of the criteria summed up above (Swiss Olympic, 2017: 3) (cf. Annex 03 - Categorization of the sports by Swiss Olympic).

In relation to the national federations, it is important to mention, the role of the Executive Board that is in charge of all the decisions of the federations itself and also the coaches that are in close contact with the professional athletes-students. The fact that the Swiss national sport federations do not have big financial resources and that they are not able to pay a salary or/and financially support their professional athletes needs to be considered (FOSPO, 2016c: 39).

1.3.2.3 OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCE: PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS

The financial support acquired by the Swiss governmental stakeholders is not enough to financially sustain their season and to pursue their professional sport career (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 220). For this reason, the athletes-students have to search for other sponsors (FOSPO, 2016c: 44). An important stakeholder who is involved in the Swiss sport system and helps athletes to pursue their professional career is "Schweizer Sporthilfe", which is a Swiss association that supports athletes economically for four years who are promising and who have good chances to be the best in the world in their disciplines (Schweizer Sporthilfe, 2018: 2). Every year the athletes' results are monitored and economic help is adjusted based on them (ibidem). More precisely the athletes who are eligible for economic assistance are those who are in possession of a Gold, Silver or Bronze Swiss Olympic Card and who are the most promising (ibidem). The criteria in this case are the following (Schweizer Sporthilfe, 2018: 3):

1. Financial situation (Income minus the expenses for sport) (6 points max):

- a. < 0 CHF = 6 points
 - b. CHF 1 – CHF 12'000 = 4 points
 - c. CHF 12'001 – CHF 24'000 = 2 points
 - d. > CHF 24'000 = 0 points
2. Overall picture:
- a. Life situation (family, living situation, and so on)
 - b. Commitment of the athletes with Sporthilfe
 - c. Engagement with fundraising (Sponsoring, Contact with authorities, and so on)

The amount of funding that an athlete can receive depends on the total point scored with a maximum of nine points (Schweizer Sporthilfe, 2018: 3). For athletes who practice an Olympic sport, the funding can be maximum 36'000 CHF, which it is granted with a total of 7-9 points¹² (ibidem). For athletes who practice a non-Olympic sport the funding can reach at most 18'000 CHF, which is granted with a total of 7-9 points¹³ (ibidem).

Other important stakeholders who allow the athlete-students to make a living out of sport are private sponsors who can be identified as private associations, firms and even the families who are often sponsors themselves (FOSPO, 2016c: 44). This is a very likely possibility in many cases due to the fact that, as explained before, it is hard to be able to live only from sport prizes. Following this reasoning it is easy to comprehend the central role that sponsorships from "Schweizer Sporthilfe", and others hold.

¹² With 5-6 points the amount would be 24'000 and with 3-4 the amount would be 12'000 (Schweizer Sporthilfe, 2018: 3)

¹³ With 5-6 points the amount would be 12'000 and with 3-4 the amount would be 6'000 (Schweizer Sporthilfe, 2018: 3)

2 STATE OF THE ART

Sport can be considered a relatively well-researched and well-discussed topic in literature. It has been studied in many different research fields as well as being combined with many different aspects and (sub)-disciplines such as: economics, politics, psychology, sociology, history, law, biology, anthropology, physics and even geography. This multiple interest in sport can be related to the role, the influence and the value that sport has in the society. Even though for several years an interest in the analysis of sport has been shown, it is just in recent times that sport has been of interest for geographers. As a matter of fact, as argued by Wiese (2015: 142) sport in the field of geography received only little attention and was not fully integrated into the academic work until the early 1980s. Seeing as the focus of this paper is on gender and sport, it can be claimed that in this case study a sociological emphasis is also present. Due to the interdisciplinarity of this research the consult has been employed, not only of geography-based references, but also of sociology and sport studies.

A main concern of the literature, which is related to gender order and sport, is the influence that **school education** has over people's lives. The idea of school education as a creator of gender inequalities and as means of bringing sport as male domain into consideration is strongly supported in the literature. In this direction, Chalabaev, A. et al. (2013) argues that in Western countries sport is considered a male domain all through the academic years, starting already from kindergarten. He suggests that this leads to an internalization of sex stereotypes and gender roles in one's self during the process of socialization, which, in turn, has an influence on the perception of gender-appropriateness of sports and on the consequent participation in sport by individuals (Chalabaev, et al., 2013: 136). Similar results have been found by Aulette et al. (2009). In their research of the educational system of the USA (United States of America), they conducted an analysis of gender in the classroom throughout the whole schooling experience (from kindergarten to higher education) (Aulette et al., 2009: 108). They argue that following different treatments between boys and girls by the teacher and by the teaching materials used, schools create the dichotomy of boys and girls, which leads different perceptions of men and women not only within the school experience, where for example they detect different choices about vocational education but also in the society itself (Aulette, et al. 2009: 219).

A great number of works have been also conducted in relation to **gender** and **collegiate sport**. In this "being a woman" in (inter-) collegiate sport is a frequent topic treated by researchers. Starting from the idea that sport is a male domain, Ross & Shiner (2008) focus their research on college level and they seek understanding on the meaning of "being female" and "being athlete". Following the supposition that sport is a male domain, they

wanted to discover if college female athletes would consider being both a female and an athlete as incompatible or in conflict. To investigate this possible “paradox female-athlete”, they have conducted interviews with female athlete-students, who have not identified this paradox but have explained how they perceive a preference within society over characteristic traits of femininity and constructed images built upon it. However, the participants of their study felt comfortable performing both their athleticism in some context and their femininity in other ones (Ross & Shinew, 2007: 40).

It seems that while analysing the topic of women in intercollegiate sport, quite often the type of research that results is a quantitative research rather than a qualitative one. The report of Lapchick et al. (2017) could be a good example of this phenomenon. Their study focuses on gender disparity in college sport in 2016. The job partition¹⁴ between genders in college sport and the degree of participation of the students in college sports was analysed in more detail. In their work they compare the data of 2016 with data of previous years and they identify an increase of hiring of women in college sport (Lapchick et al., 2017: 2). However, they also specify how the majority of positions both in professional and amateur sports, as well as in all sporting organisations of the USA, are still taken up and given to white men. This leads them to detect inequalities not only among genders but also among race, where women and African-American men seem to represent a minority. As it regards sport participation, they identify a predominance of male athlete-students with a 56.4%, to which the 64.9% were white males, 17.3 % African-American and the remaining 17.8 % of other races. Of the 46.3% women, 72.6% were white females, 9.3 % African-American and the remaining 18.1 % of other races (Lapchick et al., 2017: 6).

Another example in this direction, it is the study conducted by Acosta & Carpenter (2014) about women in intercollegiate sport between 1977-2014 in the US. It analyses the changes over a span of more than 30 years in women intercollegiate sport participation and about the job positions held by women as coaches, assistant coaches, administration, athletic trainers, sport information directors and strength and conditioning coaches. As it was in the case of the previous report, an increase of positions given to women was recognized. Furthermore, in this work they recognized an increase in the participation opportunities for women in intercollegiate sport and they highlight how 2014 can be considered the peak among the almost forty years of research, where the highest number of women teams were present. They identify a series of issues, which can have an influence over the popularity of intercollegiate and interscholastic sports: a) the availability of the infrastructures, b) the

¹⁴ As coaches, athletic directors, assistant athletic directors, faculty athletics representatives, sport information directors, NCAA headquarters, etc. (Lapchick et al., 2017).

proximity of competitors, c) the roster size, d) the expenses e) the athletic interest f) the feeder system come (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 2). They also define the labelling of a sport at a university as an influence over the institutionalized support, which the teams receive (ibidem). The three most popular sports among women in college are defined as: 1) basketball (with a total of 99.1 teams) 2) volleyball (with a total of 96.6 teams); 3) Soccer (with a total of 93.3 teams), 3) cross country (with a total of 93.3 teams) (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 2). They had similar results in relation to the jobs positions as Lapchick et al. (2017). In fact, they recognized a predominance of male head coaches (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 19), paid assistant coaches (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 29), administration (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 35) and athletic trainers, sport information directors and strength/conditioning coaches (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 44) with an increased per cent of employments of women in these positions in more recent years (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014: 20; 29).

Moreover in the USA, a great number of works have also been conducted on the compatibility of a career as athlete and student. In his publication, Coakley (2015) analyses the dynamic relationship, which exists between sport, society and culture. He suggests that there is a wide range of social and cultural factors such as gender, social class, local community, (dis)ability, ethnicity and race and school, which have an influence on the attendance in sport's activities (Coakley, 2015: 503). In it he dedicates a chapter to the compatibility between sport and education by analysing in detail the education and sport system in the USA. As one of the major reasons for gender inequalities in the society he recognizes the fact that the athletic programs at school are grounded in a culture, in which values and experiences of men are considered as the core (Coakley, 2015: 496). He claims that the gender inequalities at college level are manifested not only among male and female athletes but also among races (Coakley, 2015: 496) by the inequalities between operating budgets, recruiting money and coaches' salaries granted to men and women (Coakley, 2015: 494). Even if he recognizes the uniqueness of high school and college sport programs (and their conditions), he highlights how the combination of sport and studies implies for the athlete-students the search of balance between their two commitments and the aim for both academic and athletic success (Coakley, 2015: 475). He explains also how in the USA the athletes who manage a better balance between the two are those who also have a social network (as for example coaches) that actively supports their academic career (ibidem).

Furthermore, studies such as the one by Lottes (1991) have been conducted on the requirements of effective Student Athletes Services that students should need for a better combination between sporting career and academic career. Lottes (1991) proposes a service system, which could help athlete-students to better combine education and sport. Four

categories are proposed: a) academic (career counselling, advisement, tutorial assistance), b) athletic (counselling about injuries and transition issues), c) personal and social (personal counseling and values clarification), and d) general (administrative issues and staff changes) (Lottes, 1991 cited by Carodine et al., 2001: 21). Since the higher education system in the USA is different from that applied in Switzerland, this system might be hard to apply to the local system, but it could for sure be taken into consideration, in the case of need of improvement of the current Swiss system.

It would be important to note, that the papers just presented, discuss the compatibility between sport and studies but not the compatibility between professional sport and studies. This could be related to the different system between the two countries. In North America, students at an university with a sport scholarship are responsible for fulfilling their academic responsibilities (attending classes, studying and passing exams) and in addition, they must achieve and maintain NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) eligibility standards (Coakley, 2015: 474). Failure to complete academic tasks could jeopardize the athlete-student's eligibility to compete, receive scholarship aid, and graduate from the institution (Carodine, 2001: 19; Coakley, 2015: 474). In the USA, students become professional athletes only after they have obtained their college degree and have been drafted into a professional team. However, because of the importance that college sport has in the USA, it has been suggested that sport excellence/success is more important for them than academic excellence/success (Aquilina, 2013: 374; Coakley, 2015: 474). In Switzerland, sport is not used as means to be able to attend university and an athlete does not have to be finished with his/her tertiary degree program to become a professional.

Contrary to the USA, European countries, such as Great Britain, Germany and Belgium have higher education systems, which are more similar to Switzerland and thus grants the employment for this paper, of studies more reliable to the Swiss reality. Tabor et al. (2008) analyse the compatibility of professional sport and education in Germany. In their case study on the 2008 Beijing Olympics, they explore the phenomenon of professional athletes-students attending the Olympic Games, in which they recognized an increase from a 26.2% to a 46.4% in the number of students attending the Olympic Games between the Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992) and Beijing (2008). They suggest that this increase follows a more efficient support system (Tabor et al., 2008: 9). They in fact identify an implementation in the collaboration among the stakeholders, who are involved in the education and sport system, in the politics and economics, which they consider as the potential enabler for this improvement (Tabor et al., 2008: 4). Riedl et al. (2007) have conducted research on the compatibility between sport career and academic career at a tertiary level in Germany, in which they recognize a current problem in the possibility. They claim that structural

adjustments in the University system are needed to grant better chances to combine the two careers for athlete-student (Riedl et al., 2007: 159). They in fact reason that the current system poses problems to athlete-students and they suggest both a better personal networking in sport organisation and education institutes and between them (Riedl et al., 2007: 181).

Aquilina has conducted a great amount of research in relation to athletes-students at universities. In a study which he wrote in collaboration with Henry (2010), while analysing the policies and practices of the European Union Nation¹⁵ in relation to higher education, he identifies four different positions adopted by tertiary institutes to face the needs of athlete-students attending their programs: a) state-centric regulation (backed by legislation) b) state as facilitator/sponsor fostering agreement between sport and education stakeholders c) National Sporting Federation/Institutes as intermediate negotiators with education stakeholders d) *laisser-faire*: no formal structures (Aquilina & Henry, 2010: 31). They suggest how these differences in the government involvement are due to the different aims of the policies of the nation itself and highlight how this leads to differences in the balance between rights, responsibilities and roles of athletes, universities, the state and the European Union (Aquilina & Henry, 2010: 25). In another of his works, Aquilina starts his investigation about the combination of sport and academic careers, by claiming that the reason, which leads athlete-students to pursue a dual career path is the small amount of financial reward they receive, which does not grant them the possibility to make a living out of sport (Aquilina, 2013: 374). By interviewing a number of athlete-students, he aimed for a better understanding of the opportunities, which are granted to them and a better understanding of the extent in which this dual career can be combined (Aquilina, 2013: 374). In this case his analysis focuses on the United Kingdom, France and Finland (*ibidem*) and he identifies again the dependency of the success of the combination of their dual path with their support system, which he divides into three levels: a) personal (family, peers, coaches, club and academic stuff, etc.), b) national (elite training centre, nation state, etc.) and c) international (Olympic Committee and European Union) support networks (Aquilina, 2013: 385). He also defines a series of reasons that athlete-students identify to explain their decision to have a dual career in relation to the pursuit of a dual career for British athlete-students: a) need to focus on more than one aspect of life, which helps to put things into perspective, b) skills learned in one area are valuable and transferable, c) intellectual stimulation that accompanies the physical challenges and that helps maintain commitment and interest, d) balance, e) frustration related to the negligence of education, while dedicating a prolonged

¹⁵ Switzerland has been supposedly not included in the study because it is not part of the European Union.

period of time exclusively to elite sport, but with marginal progress in sporting performance f) more security about the future g) easier transition into post-athletic career, h) better sport performance (if academic environment is sport friendly) (Aquilina, 2013: 388-389).

In line with the last two works presented, in their research, McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) analysed the compatibility between the two careers in the United Kingdom and they recognized three main areas of concern in relation to it: a) establishing the priorities of the 'student' and 'athlete' roles, b) relationships with academia and c) lack of support and understanding (McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004: 179). They specify how, while other studies have shown that athlete-students normally had to find a compromise between their two careers, where one aspect normally benefitted more than the other at different times/stages of their (academic) lives, the athlete-students who have taken part in their research had an equally driven desire to achieve their goals in both academic and sports career (McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004: 181). To this end, McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis propose that any program intended to support athlete-students should aim to see the students not only as a student but as a both an athlete and a student (Aquilina, 2013: 376). The necessity of a structural and organisational framework/programme incorporating services and personnel, who take into consideration the needs of the athlete-students and helps them combine sport and academic life successfully (Aquilina, 2013: 376), has been found also in the research conducted by De Knop et al. (1999). They present the case of one university in Belgium, which has established a specific department for top-level sport and study and they go on to explain how this addition to the system has made it possible for professional athletes-students to achieve both sporting and academic excellence without having to struggle to reach their sporting and academic goals (ibidem).

As previously introduced, contrary to other European Nations, not much has been researched about the compatibility between university and professional sport in Switzerland. There is little literature on gender and education linked to sports too. For these reasons this paper might be considered as a forerunner in this direction. A reason for this gap in the research could be recognized in the fact that "Sport Sociology" is a relatively new discipline in Switzerland. As of today, there are not many studies with a focus on Switzerland (Lamprecht et al., 2016: 192). In Switzerland, the Swiss Observatory for Sport and Physical Activity exists, which monitors and analyses the sport and physical activity of the Swiss population (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 2) on behalf of the government and other partner organizations (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 193). The institute has conducted a lot of research, as for example the national surveys about Sport in Switzerland of 2000, 2008 and 2014, in which they analyse the evolution of sport participation in Switzerland and the interest of the Swiss population in practicing sport (and physical activity) (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018:

199). The results of the survey conducted in 2014 highlighted an increase in the participation in sport of the Swiss population (FOSPO, 2014: 5), where 69% of the population affirmed to practice sport weekly, 44% do it more than once a week (in total three or more hours a week), 17% at least once a week (two or more hours a week), 8% at least once a week (FOSPO, 2014: 7).

The Observatory has also conducted research with the focus on sport and studies. Under commission of the SUSF (Swiss University Sport Federation), has analysed the chances for students to practice sports as a leisure activity until high school. The report was published in 2015 and results showed that students of Swiss high schools very active in sport. Around 80% has declared to practice sport at least once a week and 53% of it does it more than once a week. Only the 6% of the students declared not to practice sport (Bürgi, R. et al., 2015: 3). In 2018, the FOSPO (Federal Office for Sport) commissioned to the Observatory to update the list of indicators, which is used to analyse the phenomenon of sport (and physical activity) in Switzerland. This indicators cover six areas of interest Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 1): a) promotion of sport, b) education and research, c) performance and top-level sport, d) fair and safe sport, e) the Swiss sport system, f) “radar” and special indicators (Lamprecht et al., 2018: 1). The indicators of bigger interest for this paper is c) performance and top-level sport. In the chapter reserved to it, multiple aspects are analysed. They detected a general tendency of increase of number of medals and diplomas obtained at the Games (from 1964 until 2016) (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 57) as well as general tendency in the increase of cardholders¹⁶ (from 2005 until 2015) (Lamprecht et al., 2018: 58) and recognized in 2015 soccer, ice-hockey and ski as the sports, in which the higher number of cards were assigned (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 60). They also highlighted an increase from 2005 until 2011 in both the number of “Sport schools” and the number of “Partner Schools” of Swiss Olympic, which grant special infrastructures and flexibility to talented young people during their college years (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 62). In relation to the support of professional sport in Switzerland they recognize instability in the number of cardholders of Swiss Olympic Card Gold, Silver, Bronze and Elite between 2011 and 2016 (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 66). They lastly recognize an increase media interest in soccer, ski, ice hockey and tennis as the highest in Switzerland (Lamprecht & Stamm, 2018: 71). These indicators seem to be updated regularly with new data, however, even though in most of cases data has been recently updated, the chapter related to “performance and top-level sport” does not report any updated data. The numbers reported are mostly dated 2011 (only a small number of times the date is 2015) and have Swiss Olympic as the source. An update to this data might

¹⁶ Important to clarify, that contrarily to my case study, Lamprecht & Stamm took into consideration all types of the Swiss Olympic Cards in their study.(Talent, Elite, Bronze, Silver and Gold) .

be needed. It is important to note that it seems that Swiss Olympic has not conducted any research on this topic in the last few years and this could be the reason behind the use of data from 2011. Important to note is how these studies about Switzerland do not take into consideration the tertiary education and its compatibility with professional sport but limit the analysis to compatibility between sport and school until high school. For this reason, more analysis in the direction are considered necessary.

In 2015 an international network of research (SPLISS 2.0) about professional sport was published. This research is an updated version of the previous study SPLISS¹⁷ dated 2008, in which major objectives were the comparison of the success of six nations¹⁸ in elite sport and the analysis of their sport policies (Winand, 2010: 613). To achieve that, they defined nine categories/Pillars¹⁹, with the identification of more than 100 success factors to compare in order to measure competitive position of nations in élite sport (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 17). Following the fact that, as argued by the authors themselves, SPLISS 1.0 failed to deliver conclusive evidence and due to the fact that the study itself had taken into consideration only countries, where the policy systems were institutionalised by the government only (ibidem), this had lead to the exclusion of countries where non-governmental organisations and private organisations have a central role (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 18). The new SPLISS 2.0 examined the reality of professional sport in 15 different countries: Belgium (Flanders & Wallonia), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Northern Ireland, South Korea, Japan, Brazil and Australia (ibidem). The objective of the SPLISS 2.0 project was a better understanding of sport policies and the way they lead to international sporting success. It also had the objective of the understanding of both the efficiency and the effectiveness of national professional sport policies (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 21). A detailed review of the nine Pillars would not be possible in this Master Thesis. I decided to limit the review to the pieces of work, which discussed the topic addressed in this research. An interesting and relevant result is that at the time (2012), and considering only the athletes-students that has taken part to the study, the authors identified a “comprehensive planning in regard to talent identification and development” in the Swiss sport system (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 200) and defined Switzerland (and Japan) as the most advanced nations in the process of talent identification

¹⁷ Acronym for Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (De Bosscher et al., 2015).

¹⁸ Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom (ibidem).

¹⁹ a) Pillar 1: financial support, b) Pillar 2: governance, organisation and structure of sport policies: an integrated approach to policy development, c) Pillar 3: initiation: foundation & participation, d) Pillar 4: Performance: talent development and talent identification system e) Pillar 5: excellence: post career and athletic career support, f) Pillar 6: Training facilities, g) Pillar 7: coaching provision & coach development, g) (inter)national competition, h) Pillar 9: Scientific research & innovation (ibidem).

among those, which have been analysed by the study (ibidem). With regard to the level of state intervention, they defined the Swiss state as a sponsor/facilitator²⁰, where the state develops a network of recognized schools, which offer agreements in response to athlete-students special needs (for example flexible timetables, distance learning, scholarships and entry requirements) (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 212). It also highlighted the role of the state in the provision of funding and the cantonal coordination rather than a federal one (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 212). In addition to this they explain how in Switzerland, there is no formal structure to regulate the co-ordination between the sport stakeholders and the educational stakeholders (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 220), leading to unequal degree of flexibility granted to the athlete-students (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 221). They identify as central the fact that athletes should not depend on the individual decisions and flexibility of their educational institutes to be granted support services in order to combine their two careers (De Bosscher et al., 2015: 223).

As it regards the current Swiss (recreational and professional) sport system the FOSPO (Federal Office of Sport) has published a detailed analysis in 2016.. In it, it is recognized the importance of professional sport in the reinforcement of a national identity (FOSPO, 2016c: 5). They also recognized the financial unsustainability of professional sport in Switzerland, where various degrees of support are granted to the professional athlete following the degree of talent recognized (FOSPO, 2016c: 26). Soccer and ice-hockey are identified as exceptions in this sense following an easier and larger commercialization of the sport (FOSPO, 2016c: 26). In regards to the compatibility between tertiary education and professional sport, in this report, the lack of a formal and unitary national regulation is recognized, leading the athlete-students to depend on the understanding of the faculty member to be able to combine their dual career as best they can. (FOSPO, 2016c: 28).

²⁰ To define the typology of the state co-ordination they employed the degree of coordination defined by Aquilina and Henry (2010) previously presented in this chapter.

3 A WORLD OF GENDERED OPPORTUNITIES

Masculinity and **femininity** are central concepts that have been strongly researched in academic literature and a great number of debates have been generated around it. It follows a difficulty in defining them, (almost) every author has their personal definition, their personal understanding of the concepts. Consequently, it is important to define, which theoretical framework has been chosen for this Master thesis.

In this research, Connell's work has been employed. Her work about masculinities and hegemonic masculinity helped to understand how the (implicit) structure of the society has an influence on multiple aspects of the life of individuals. The notion of **hegemonic masculinity** provided an explanatory context to gender order and gender relations and has been often used in the research's body to conceptualize and critically evaluate the relationship between sport and masculinity.

3.1 THE NOTIONS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY & MASCULINITIES

Gramsci first introduced hegemony as a notion in the 1970s while aiming for a better understanding of class relations in the democratic societies, in which he identified class inequality generated by dominant classes who managed to impose themselves (and their rules) over the other classes and control society (Jefferson, 2002: 68; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 831; Hearn, 2004: 54). Combining this notion to the notion of masculinity, Connell first formulated the notion of **hegemonic masculinity** in the 1980s (Hearn, 2004: 569). Since its creation around forty years ago, Connells' work about hegemonic masculinity has influenced the view not only on practices and meanings of both men, gender, masculinities (Moller, 2007: 263; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 829) but also on social hierarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 829). The concept has been widely used as framework for a significant body of research and has consequently generated international debates, discussions, contestations, critics around it (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 835) which seems to confirm Connells' proposition that gender orders lead to the construct of multiple masculinities that also change over time (ibidem). This has lead through the years to adjustments of the notion (ibidem).

The starting point of Connells theorization about gender relations and gender order was a strong critique of the "sex-role theory" and its gendered nature, in which, she identified a lack of consideration of power (Donaldson, 1993: 643; Demetriou, 2001: 338; Moller, 2007: 263). More in detail, the "sex-role theory" identifies the social structure with biological differences. Consequently reducing gender to two complementary and homogeneous categories, underplaying both social inequality and power (Demetriou, 2001: 338). Connell's notion of

hegemonic masculinity integrates the connection between power and masculinities and seems to provide that missing conceptual tool to the sex-role theory (Moller, 2007: 266). The aim of Connells theorization was to understand how unequal gender order reproduces itself in society, where hierarchies of domination and subordination between women and men, and among men are accepted over time (Jefferson, 2002: 68). In her theory Connell defined multiple forms of masculine power: domination, subordination and oppression (Moller, 2007: 266). At first she identified a dominance of men and a consequent subordination of women in the social system (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). This could be recognized in one of the central points of her works: **patriarchy**. Patriarchy is seen as an agent that over time has shaped (and still shapes) society and that has consequently created a patriarchal gender based system of society (ibidem).

By defining hegemonic masculinity as the “configuration of gender practice that embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995: 77), Connell showed how patriarchy is a construct in the social system that has to be considered in relation of the other forms of the system. Moreover, this further suggests the inclusion of a dynamic element in the conceptualization, which could be recognized as a **historical/temporal-dimension**. This would imply that gender hierarchies are subject to change, which would further imply the existence of hegemonic masculinity in specific circumstances and exposed to historical changes (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832 - 833). As described by Connell in her work with Messerschmidt (2005: 832): “Hegemonic masculinity (...) embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men”. This element not only would show the superiority of men over women into the society, but also of men over men whose gender practice does not conform to the hegemonic configuration (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). Connell (1987) defines this as **subordinated masculinities**, and implies the fact that hegemonic masculinity not only generates a dominance of men over women but also over subordinated masculinities (Demetriou: 2001: 341).

In addition, Connell outlines three major and inseparable structural models that represent the structure of any gender relation: **power**, **labour** and **cathexis** (Connell, 1987: 99). As it relates to **power**, Connell considers the configurations of institutionalized power as authority, force and control and hierarchies of states and business with regard to gender (Maharaj, 1995: 60). She reasoned that due to the fact that men control “the means of institutionalized power, such as the state or the army” (Demetriou, 2001: 341), society (virtually) tends to exclude women and normalize sexual regulations and surveillance, institutional and

interpersonal violence (against women) (Connell, 1987: 104; Maharaj, 1995: 60) With regard to **labour** Connell defines a “**patriarchal dividend**”, which, due to the dominant position of men in the patriarchal society, lead to a different treatment among women and men in the society and a gender division of labour. It has been discussed, how labour market would be consequently characterized not only by segregation with the creation (and distinction) of “female works” and “male works” (Connell, 1987: 104; Maharaj, 1995: 60), but also by discrimination in training, promotion and unequal incomes (Connell, 1987: 104; Demetriou, 2001: 341; Maharaj, 1995: 60). Moreover, it has been explained, how women would be central in the construction of masculinities with different defined roles, such as: girlfriends, wives, mothers, sexual partners, and so on (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 848). Therefore they would subsequently mainly be considered responsible for childcare and housework (Connell, 1987: 122). On the reasons behind this is that motherhood and caring for children are long considered as central features of femininity (Schippers, 2006: 97) and because masculinity, as already explained, has been associated with dominant and powerful characteristics as: toughness, strength, independence, aggressiveness, competition, etc. (Bryson, 1987: 357; Connell, 1987; Maharaj, 1995: 62; 1995; Kane, M. et al., 2002; Steinfeldt et al. 2016: 660 - 661).

Lastly, in regard to **cathexis**, Connell explains how it is related to men’s and women’s emotional and sexual relationship with each other (Connell, 1987: 111). In greater detail, it is suggested that women exist as potential sexual objects for heterosexual men as sexual validation (Connell, 1987: 113; Bryson, 1987: 356; Schippers, 2006: 90), and men compete with each other for this (Donaldson, 1993: 645). Following this principle, heterosexual practices would be encouraged and sexual desire between whom is not included in the dichotomy between male and women would be faced with hostility (Connell, 1987: 113; Maharaj, 1995: 61). Consequently men would be disproven as sexual objects for men and women would be disproven as sexual objects for women (Connell, 1987: 113). Therefore, this would also show that the hegemonic masculinity would be framed within a heteronormative conception of gender, excluding other gender categories. The heteronormative nature of the concept has been identified and criticized by Whitehead (1990). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) answer to his accusation by claiming that the concept of “masculinity is said to rest logically on a dichotomization of sex (biological) versus gender (cultural) and thus marginalizes or naturalizes the body” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 836).

Moreover, the distinction between these three inseparable structures (power, labour, cathexis), it would seem to show how hegemonic masculinity, as a process, is profoundly institutionalized and involves not only social structures but also the people’s personal life.

Connell suggests that there has been an **institutionalization** of men's dominance over women, which had an effect over multiple aspects in the life of men and women that would define the roles of the two genders in the society (Demetriou, 2001: 341). In this regard, Maharaj (1995: 60) suggests that power, labour and cathexis are the fundamental features of the structure of any gender regime and of any gender order, that are implicated in any society's ideas of both femininity and masculinity. This would be related to the fact that Connell defined gender as a social construct, which can differ overtime: "Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 836). Connell additionally argued that gender is defined by the culture and that differs from place to place (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 839). She furthered her analysis in her work alongside Messerschmidt, where she reasoned that: "masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 836). Maharaj also approve the social construction of gender and argues that labour, power and cathexis are central to identify "the culturally specific structures of labour, power and cathexis at play in order to understand and analyse the gender relations in any institution in any socio-historical context" (1995: 60).

Additionally, in one of her latest works, Connell introduces two new concepts: "complicit masculinities" and "marginalized masculinities". She defines **complicit masculinities** as the large numbers of men who receive benefits of the patriarchy, without embodying, challenging or practicing their connection to hegemonic masculinity and masculine dominance (Connell, 1995: 79; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). She then proceeds to define **marginalized masculinities** as the result of the interplay of gender with class and race (Connell, 1995: 80). As explained by Jefferson (2002: 69) following the concept of domination/subordination, the masculinities of a subordinated ethnic group will be subject to the domination of the masculinity of the dominant masculinity. In this specific instance, the explanation of subordinated, marginalized and complicit masculinities lead to the mention of **heterosexuality** and **homophobia** as central point related to the notion of hegemonic masculinity. In fact, as previously mentioned, the hegemonic form of masculinity does not lead only to a subordination of women, but also to an oppression of men that does not respond to the hegemonic elements of masculinity.

3.2 GENDER & SPORT CATEGORIZATION

Gender has been recognized, alongside with race, age, social class and other, as one of the major theoretical and social categories that is relevant for a social analysis of sport (Hall, 1988: 330). In fact, each sport could be recognized as the ensemble of social practices, which are both reproduced and changed over time by individuals (Hall, 1988: 331).

“You throw like a girl”. Everyone may have heard and/or read a sentence such as this. This is not just a simple statement; these words imply the aptness for certain sports for women and man in the society, and the appropriateness of the qualities that the individual has to have, to practice a specific sport. In this specific example, it could be interpreted as “not having the ability to throw proficiently” (Ross and Shinew, 2008: 40) and according to it, the ability of a woman would be lower than the ability of a man. On the one hand a man, who is not efficient in sports would be compared to a woman and on the other hand, a woman, who is able to throw proficiently would be considered as woman with male-like qualities (ibidem). This would be a proof of the gender-division of sport. Sport has been long considered in the literature as one of the aspects of social life where gender division is made and maintained and where gender hierarchies are reproduced (Thompson, 2002: 106; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 846). Following the gender role division in the society sport has been long considered to be appropriate for men and less appropriate with the feminine role in society (Koivula, 1995: 543). Leading to the consideration of sport has (predominately) based on an ideal of masculinity (Ross and Shinew, 2008; Anderson, 2009; Bryson, 1987; Cszima et al. 1988; Messner 1988; Ferez, 2012), in which masculinity-attributes (e.g., strength, toughness, independence, domination, aggressiveness, competition, heterosexuality) were taught and internalized (Bryson, 1987: 357; Connell, 1987; Maharaj, 1995: 62; 1995; Kane, M. et al., 2002; Steinfeldt et al. 2016: 660 - 661). By emphasizing the differences between male and female features, sport seems to celebrate male superiority in society (Bryson, 1987: 349; Whitson, 1990; Anderson, 2009; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Steinfeldt et al., 2016: 659; Travers, 2008: 82). Likewise, it has been argued in the literature how this would lead to both a clear definition of what would be gender-appropriate and to differential process of socialization into sports for boys and girls (Koivula, 1995: 544; Steinfeldt et al., 2016, 661). However, as also debated in the research, in celebrating sport hegemonic masculinity (Travers, 2008: 82; Bryson, 1987: 349), sport not only subordinates femininity but also the varieties of masculinity, which differs from the characteristics of the dominant form of masculinity (Whitson, 1990). It has been highlighted how this would cause the perpetuation of the normalization and to the reinforcement of (gender) inequality in society (Connell, 1987; 1990, 1995; Steinfeldt et al., 2016: 659; Travers, 2008: 82).

Sabo and Messner (1993) highlighted a paradox in sport because on the one hand women are allowed to do sport, but on the other hand they are still discriminated, as not the same degree of access to sport and the same resources seemed to be granted to them such as that granted to the men. It needs to be acknowledged that over the last few decades the social acceptance of female participation in sports has significantly risen. In fact, action seems to have been taken from some institutions with the objective to lessen the discriminations and disparities (Koivula, 1995: 555; Ross and Shiner, 2008: 41). Important to note is the fact that there are still improvements to be made in order to reach equality between women and men in sport. In this regard, Clasen (2001) suggested that even if an increase in the numbers and finances can be recognized, this does not change the overall environment of sports (Ross and Shiner, 2008: 41). Hargreaves (1994: 14) further states that while women may be approaching equalization of opportunity they are typically making these gains without upsetting the order of society that embraces existing traditions and male dominance (Ross and Shiner, 2008: 41). This would lead to reason that even if there is progress, a classification of sport on the basis of gender is present and still shapes the sport landscapes.

While considering both gender order and sport it is important to note how sport remains an area where “gender bi-categorisation and division is institutionalised both from an organisational and a legal perspective” (Ferez, 2012: 272). This can be easily understood by reflecting on the separation between women and men competition or on sports’ categorization. It can be reasoned on the gender – separation of sport, as said by Connell (2012), that in being “sport a body-focused practice, the articulation of gender relations with bodies is particularly in focus” (Connell, 2012: 178). This point is currently one of the most discussed topic of the research in relation to sport, however, because the topic and the objectives of the paper do not align with this, it is not possible to discuss the problematic more in detail. A point in relation to this, which is worth a mention, is the labelling in the society of female athlete (Ross and Shiner, 2008: 41) and their respective sport associations (Travers, 2008: 82), while males remain unmarked. Travers (2008: 82) and Clasen (2001: 37) agree that this would represent a very powerful example of the assumption that sport is a male domain, a male prerogative. Clasen (2001: 37) further hypothesizes that the paradox is related to the traditional dualisms that characterizes Western culture, which tends to be hierarchical and which defines male (and the relative masculine traits) as better than female (and feminine traits) (cited by Ross and Shiner, 2008: 41).

Regarding the previously mentioned categorization of sport, a great number of authors have advanced their personal theories and categorizations. Many of which are based on **gender appropriateness of sport**. A first example of categorization of sport based over gender-appropriateness could be considered the theorization of Metheny (1965). He identifies a social acceptability of sport based over gender stereotypes (Ross & Shinew, 2008: 43). In 1965, he suggested a model to define sports as “socially acceptable for girls” (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 202) and by classifying them following the conformity of each sport to stereotypical views of appropriate female behaviour in the society (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 202).

More in detail, Methenys classification system of sport is based on four points and determines a system of acceptable and unacceptable sports for women. The first postulate can be recognized in the inadmissibility of women participation in international competition in sport, in which **direct bodily contact with the opponent** is involved (ibidem). Also inadmissible for women would be direct application of bodily force to a heavy object is implied, projecting the body through space over long distances, and face-to-face opposition, where contact may occur with the opponent (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 202; Ross & Shinew, 2008: 43). Examples of it would be sports as high hurdles, pole vault, boxing (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 202). The second postulate of Methenys classification is related to college sport. He reasons that some sports are not acceptable for college students but could be accepted for a **minority of women** (ibidem). In this specific instance, the included sports would be those in which projection of the body through space over a moderate distance is implied, or in which strength controls the movements of the body or in which force is applied to a relatively (ibidem). Examples would be gymnastics, javelin and long jump (ibidem). As it relates the third postulate, some forms of **individual competition** would be acceptable for (college women); in greater detail the competitions of sports in which **either force or the resistance of an object** are implied or the use of object to assist movement of the body, or again the body projection into space in an aesthetically pleasing form as for example on golf, figure skating or swimming (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 202; Ross & Shinew, 2008: 43). The last postulate of Metheny was referred to **face-to-face activities**: sports, in which there is a barrier between the opponents or in which the use of a light tool as in tennis or badminton racquet is implied, would be acceptable for women (ibidem). It could be concluded that for Metheny for a sport to be socially accepted for women, it should involve the least bodily contact possible and it should be as aesthetically pleasing as possible.

Over the years Methenys sport's separation based over gender-specific model has been largely discussed in the research. The categorization of sport of Kane and Snyder (1989) goes in a similar direction. In fact, they argue that the level of physicality involved in a sport

determines if the sport can be considered as a “typically male” sport or a “typically female” sport (Ross & Shiner, 2008: 44). Connell (2008) seems to agree with both Metheny (1965) and Kane and Snyder (1989) by claiming that “sport that involve a certain level of physical confrontation and (legal) violence are seen as test of manhood – football codes, boxing, ice hockey being the most visible “ (Connell, 2008: 140). Riemer and Visio (2003) approve the postulates made by Metheny about gender-appropriateness of sport, but they add a gender-neutrality dimension to it. They believe that its theorization is based on a dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, failing to consider what could be found in-between the spectrum (Riemer and Visio, 2003: 194). This reasoning is also supported by Koivula (1995) who suggests that not all sports can be identified as male-specific or female-specific. In his research on sport, he concludes that sports, which do not involve much contact between players, can be considered as appropriate for both women and men (Koivula, 1995: 544). Both Metheny (1965) and Riemer and Visio (2003) recognize the dependency of the categorization over the localization in which a research is conducted, because as empathized by Metheny (femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and can differ from culture to culture and from social organization to social organization Riemer and Visio, 2003: 194). Good examples could be soccer and basketball which have been a central subject of discussion in the literature. Some researchers considered it a male-appropriate sport and other more of a neutral sport. Metheny (1965) did not list it as inappropriate for women, but he indicated volleyball as the only team-sport appropriated for women. In their research, Riemer and Visio (2003: 202) defined it as gender neutral. That being said, the distinction between masculine/male-appropriate sport, feminine/female-appropriate sport and gender-neutral sport, that has been presented has a certain degree of arbitrariness and can not be generalized or applied everywhere.

4 METHODOLOGY

In a research project such as a Master Thesis the choice of the methodology to use is crucial because it will influence and impact the unfolding of the research and of its results. After assessing the objectives of this research and the nature of the research questions, it has been decided to conduct a qualitative research. A qualitative research aims to explore and understand the experiences, emotions, feelings, perspectives, evaluations of the participants of multiple dimensions of the social world, such as social processes, social relations, institutions, etc. (Flick, 2007: 2; Gratton & Jones, 2004: 24; Mason, 2002: 65; Vanclay, 2015: 548). Shortly, a qualitative research is exploratory (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 141) and it implies the explanation on “how things work in particular contexts” (Mason, 2002: 136). In this specific instance, in a Swiss context.

To this it should be added that, in having taken the decision to conduct a case study on professional athletes who are simultaneously students and athletes in Switzerland, the population that posses these requirements is small. This means that choosing a quantitative approach would have been inappropriate because it would not have granted a great number of answers and it would have allowed access to explanations and not description of the phenomenon (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 140-141).

4.1 COLLECTION OF THE DATA – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Following the reasoning shown in the brief introduction of the chapter, I decided to conduct **qualitative interviews** as the method to gather data for the Master Thesis. As discussed by Mason (2002), qualitative interviews are to be considered a very efficient method in cases where the main focus of the research is to investigate and explain social processes, social changes, social organization or social meanings (Mason, 2002: 65) and where, the objectives require a complex and in depth understanding of people’s personal or contextual narratives and experiences, rather than a comparison between a larger number of people (ibidem), that would contrarily imply the use of a quantitative method, more likely based on statistical methods.

More in detail I have employed **semi-structured interviews** have been employed. This strategy can be explained as follow: semi-structured interviews are verbal exchanges between an interviewer, who asks questions and an interviewee who answers them (Longhurst, 2010: 105). This decision was made following the objectives of this research, it was in fact considered as the more suitable method. This type of interview allows the study of “complex behaviours, opinions and emotions and for collecting a diversity of experiences” (Longhurst, 2010: 112). At the same time it “enables participants to talk about their

experiences in their own words, and allow them to elaborate on any areas of particular interest or importance” (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 142). Choosing the semi-structured interviews implied for the researcher the creation and the use of a **guideline** with a set of standard questions and sub-questions, where the questions were displayed in a preferable order in which they should have been asked (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 270). Following the possibility of conducting the interview in various languages, multiple versions of the guideline were created. Namely versions of the guideline were prepared in Italian, German, French and English. The semi-structured questions in it were classified in eight major categories/topics (cf. Annexe 04 – Interview-guideline - German Version):

1. **Sport:** in which questions related to their history with sport were asked
2. **Stadium:** in which questions related to their academic career were asked
3. **Professional sport & studies:** in which questions about their current dual career and the support they receive by Swiss education and sport institutions were asked
4. **Challenges:** in which questions about the challenges they face in their everyday life, in sport and in the academia were asked
5. **Gender:** in which questions with the focus on gender discrimination in sport were asked
6. **Swiss Education System:** in which an analysis over the current Swiss education system was asked
7. **Sport in Switzerland:** in which an analysis over the current Swiss sport system was asked
8. **Future plans:** in which questions related to their future plans were asked

It is important to note that the interaction between the two parts started with a set of warm-up questions and topics that were considered less sensitive and with which the respondent might have been more comfortable answering (Longhurst, 2010: 107; Mason, 2002: 73). The questions that were considered more delicate or thought-provoking were planned to be asked in the second half of the interview, to a point where the participants felt more comfortable with the interaction (Longhurst, 2010, 107), to grant hypothetically a more relaxed and detailed answer by the athlete-student. This allowed a great degree of freedom for both the interviewee and the interviewer and the whole encounter might be considered a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Mason, 2002: 67) that unfolded with an informal tone (Longhurst, 2010, 105). In fact, it allowed the researcher to be flexible about the gathering of the data (Gratton & Jones, 2004, 141). And following the flow of the interviews, the responses and the narratives given by the interviews adjustments have been made: either

additional questions were asked or the predetermined order of the set of question was adapted (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 272), or pre-determined questions were rephrased (Lillrank, 2012: 292). It allowed then to the participant to talk more freely (Gratton & Jones, 2004, 142) and to respond with their own words and it did not limit them to 'yes or no' – answers (Longhurst, 2010: 105).

The means by which the questions were formulated was fundamental for the collection of comparable, realistic and reliable data. In fact, as explained by Manderson et al. (2006) the responses given by the interviewee are responses “to verbal and nonverbal cues of encouragement from the interviewer and in line with their own comfort with disclosure” (Manderson, et al., 2006: 1320). In other words the questions lead to different possible responses and at the end, what the subject explained to the interviewer was a choice that was made following what they believe would be relevant for the project of the researcher and in which they are taking part (ibidem).

The interviews were primarily of a narrative nature and they took place mostly without consulting the interview-guideline, so that the discussion could unfold more freely offering the chance to the participants to explore the issues and topics which are more important and crucial to them (Longhurst, 2010: 107). As suggested by Longhurst (2010) at the end of the interviews the interview-schedule were consulted, so that it could be verified that none of the question would have been left unanswered before the end of the interview (Longhurst, 2010: 107).

Moreover, it is important to underline that the interviews did not happen all in one place, they took place in different regions within Switzerland, which had been discussed among the interviewees and the interviewer. If possible, the interviews happened in relatively private locations (Gratton & Jones, 2004, 145) and neutral, informal (Longhurst, 2010; 110) so that a comfortable atmosphere for both could be created (Herzog, 2005: 27). The fact that the influence of external factors could be reduced to the minimum was important both for the interviewee as well as for the interviewer. In fact, on the one hand having little background noises granted an easier process of transcription for the researcher (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 145, Longhurst, 2010: 110) and on the other hand, it also allowed the interviewee to not be disturbed during their personal reasoning and while delivering their personal answers (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 145). In addition, it allowed an equitable relationship between the two parties (Herzog, 2005: 27). More precisely, the interviews took place either in the interviewees' apartments, in little coffee shops or in quiet corners of various Swiss tertiary education Institutes.

Before the start of the interview, confidentiality treatment of all the data and permission to tape the interview was asked and granted. The interviews have been conducted in three of the national languages: French, Italian and German. The language choice for the interview was made following the wishes of the participants so that they could be able to express their narrative and feelings more freely.

For a better analysis it was decided to record the interview via audio. As argued by (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 148) it would be impossible to recall everything that was discussed without an audio-tape and the non-implication of it might lead to an incomplete and imprecise analysis of the data and consequently the results would not be fully reliable. Even though Gratton & Jones (2004: 149) suggested taking notes during the interview it was decided not to do so and to employ **active listening** (Lillrank, 2012: 282). This choice was made in order to grant more freedom to the interviewees and more so to have a better understanding of their narratives, so that it was possible to be fully focused on the interviewees' points of view and their narratives, without having to split the attention between taking notes and listening the answers of the participants. This allowed identifying emerging stories that were worthy of more attention and a change in the sequence of (sub-)questions (ibidem). Moreover, this potentially resulted in a better relationship between interviewer and interviewee too as well as the sharing of more information, not only due to the more attention to the narratives but also due to a trustworthy relationship between the two parts (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 147). It needs to be added the fact that, taking notes had the potential to distract interviewees. Additionally, in being a part of the interviews held in languages that are not the mother tongue of the researcher too, taking notes might have been harmful for the research because it could have potentially led to situations/cases where a not full understanding of the answer would have happened or interesting narratives would have been "lost" in the process because the interviewee was occupied writing and not fully listening to the answers that were being given.

Even though notes were not taken during the interviews, as suggested by Longhurst (2010: 110), it was decided to mark notes after the end of the interview. The notes consisted in observations about the general tone of the conversation, key themes that emerged and anything that was particularly relevant. Soon after the end of the interview, first recollections of their answers to the questions of the interview-guideline were also noted down. This method allowed the interviewer's observations, interpretations and judgements not to be forgotten and lost from memory with time (Mason, 2002: 77). The implication of audio-records and of active listening resulted in more data to transcribe and analyse but it was considered as acceptable as it granted more freedom of expression for both the interviewee

and the interviewer. Another reason was that it would have given richer data, minimizing the possibilities to lose important data.

Lastly, it is important to address gender relations during the interviews. It is often suggested that gender (as well as race and social class) is one of the factors that can influence relationships during interviews and consequently the results of a research (Manderson et al., 2006: 1317; Gratton & Jones, 2004: 152). Due to the fact that the age range, the status (students) and the interests (strong passion for sport) of both interviewees and interviews were similar, it is believed that this would have limited the issues, which could be related to gender implications. As example to this it can be noted that both men and women have given real personal/private details about their experiences and personal lives.

4.2 SAMPLING & RECRUITING STRATEGY

As suggested by Rice (2010: 238), the sampling strategy is strongly related to the objectives of the research and to the resources available such as time (and money). In being this research a case study about Switzerland the aim of the work was to ideally generate patterns and explain a mechanism in a specific context. Following the nature and the scopes of this case study, a **combined purposeful sampling** was applied as sampling strategy (Patton, 1990: 181). Multiple (qualitative) sampling strategies were applied to select the population eligible of this research. Every approach applied had, in fact, its specific purpose (ibidem).

At first, the suitable interviewees were selected through **criterion sampling** (Patton, 1990: 176). Moreover, since the focus of this paper is a very specific group of people, a reduction of the body of interest and prearranged criteria were applied to identify and select the population²¹ who was potentially eligible for the research (Patton, 1990, 181; Emmel, 2013: 40). Specifically, following the research questions, in this paper the eligible population are **Swiss men and women who are both professional athletes and students at Swiss tertiary education institutes**. Ideally, all Swiss professional athletes-students are eligible for the Master Thesis. In this case study female student-professional athletes and male student-professional athletes were considered as two subgroups. Following Gratton & Jones' (2004: 105) suggestion to have an equal representation for each subgroup, 50 % of the interviews were planned to be (and were) women and 50% were planned to be (and were) men.

In this research I further detect the presence of **gatekeepers**²². In fact, the selection of the interview partner happened also via contacts that were provided from an e-mail (and a

²¹ Population in this paper is defined as „every individual case that possesses the characteristic that is of interest of the researcher“ (Gratton& Jones, 2004: 100).

²² Gatekeepers can be defined as people, who regulate both formally and informally the access to a specific

reminder) sent by the SUSF (Swiss University Sport Federation). The e-mail was created in collaboration with them and was sent in three national languages (Italian, German and French) to the participants of Universiades and Youth Olympics who are currently studying at a Swiss tertiary institute. It is important to note that to take part to these sport events, athletes have to be holders of one of the four Swiss Olympic Cards²³, which was the second condition in order to be considered as eligible to take part in the study. The criteria to access to these worldwide student-competitions and of this research coincided and it allowed all the recipients of the e-mail to be potentially eligible candidates for this case study (cf. Annexe 05 – E-Mail SUSF – German Version). In the recruitment - e-mail, which was sent, the purposes of the study were explained as well the criteria that the participant had to fulfil in order to be able to take part in the study. The voluntary nature of the study was also emphasised, and the athletes-students were asked to contact the researcher directly via e-mail for more information, if they were ready to take part to the study and to plan the interview. After receiving their applications to participate in the study, e-mails, text message or phone calls were exchanged in order to arrange time and location of the interview-meetings. Not every students-athletes that had shown interest took part of the study, either for withdrawals or due to incompatibility of schedules.

Moreover, it is important to note that not all the interview-partners that were interviewed were found thanks to the email sent by the SUSF. The researcher personally knew some professional athletes-students, who fulfilled the criteria of the sampling that agreed to participate in this study. Thanks to the media and to social media the researcher knew about the double career of other athletes. In these cases contact with them was made trough e-mail or messages on social media were an adapted version of the e-mail created in collaboration with the SUSF was sent.

The implication of key-informants as gatekeepers indicates the implication of another technique to achieve the sample, which is called **snowball sampling** (Emmel, 2013: 130-131). Another key aspect of the snowball sampling was applied for the recruitment of the most suitable sample possible. In fact, the participants were asked for the contact information of other athlete-students, who might be eligible for the study (Flick, 2007, 28, Gratton & Jones, 2004: 103; Koerber & McMichael, 2008: 459; Patton, 1990: 176), to be able to eventually recruit them (Longhurst, 2010: 109; Koerber & McMichael, 2008: 49). The suggestions from other top performance athletes-students were checked to verify the

research field (Flick, 2007: 117).

²³ Namely either Swiss Olympic Card Elite, Swiss Olympic Card Bronze, Swiss Olympic Card Silver or Swiss Olympic Card Gold.

suitability of the suggested participants for the study. After this verification, contact was taken either by e-mail or messages (text or via social media). Snowball sampling was also applied in cases where athlete-students were recommended by friends and acquaintances of the researcher itself (Emmel, 2013: 130-131; Warren et al., 2003: 99).

4.3 SAMPLE

As previously introduced, gender is the focus of this research and it follows that the aim of the sampling was to have half of the interviews-partners male and the other half female. As reasoned by Mason (2002: 134) while using a purposeful sampling strategy for a qualitative study, the size of its sample has not to be statistically representative of the total population. More in detail, it was important for the sample selected to have the correct focus and to be able to provide meaningful data to address the research questions of a study (Mason, 2002: 134) In addition, it was central for the research, to have a sample, which size could, be manageable (Emmel, 2013: 154). The sample is in fact, strongly influenced by resources such as time or the availability of (potential) candidates (Emmel, 2013: 154; Koerber & McMichael, 2008: 468), as well as, the objectives of the research and the nature of the research (Morse, 2000: 3).

Following these principles, in being this research a Master thesis and due to the time schedule related to it, it was planned to conduct between fifteen and twenty interviews. The objective was met, and a total of sixteen interviews were held with male and female Swiss professional athletes who are also students at a tertiary institute in Switzerland.. In greater detail, for this Master Thesis sixteen interviews were conducted. Eight women aged between twenty-one and twenty-six years old (born 1992-1997) and eight men, whose age range was between twenty-one and twenty six years old (born 1992 - 1997) were interviewed and consequently partook in the study.

The interviewees come from eight different Swiss Cantons:

Canton	Number of interviews
Basel – City	one
Basel - Country	one
Bern	three
Neuchatel	one
Saint Gall	four
Ticino	three
Wallis	one
Zurich	two

TABLE 1: LIST OF THE CANTON OF ORIGIN OF THE PARTICIPANTS (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

Single/individual **face-to-face interviews** were preferred in this case study because they allow more freedom of expression for the participants. In this regard, it is important to note that even if more athletes-students had given their availability to take part to this study, it was taken the decision to stop with the interviews after the sixteenth because an equal representation of the two subgroups of this research was achieved. Conducting more interviews might have made harder to keep and achieve the equal representation between male and female interviewees. Additionally, to stop interviewing was considered as a decision that would not harm the research. In fact, a great level of **saturation**²⁴ (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 153) was already achieved. As explained before, following the origin of the interviewees and their first language, the interviews were held in three national languages:

Language	Number of interviews
German	ten
French	two
Italian	three

TABLE 2: LANGUAGES OF THE INTERVIEWS (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

²⁴ Saturation refers to the stage of a fieldwork, where the researcher does not get any new and different information from further enquiry (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 153) and where new data does not produce significant addition or changes to the codebook (Emmel 2013, 148).

As previously introduced, in order to respect the objectives of the paper, all the interviewees are holders of one of the Swiss Olympic Cards. Specifically:

Swiss Olympic Card	Number of card - holders
Gold	none
Silver	three
Bronze	six
Elite	eight

TABLE 3: SWISS OLYMPIC CARDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

The students-athletes who took part to this study practice a variety of sports for a total of ten different sports. More in detail they practice:

Sport	Number of athletes
Athletics	three
Beach-volleyball	two
Boxing	one
Fencing	two
Judo	one
Mountain-bike	one
Orienteering	two
Shooting	one
Volleyball	two
Soccer	one

TABLE 4: LIST OF THE SPORTS PRACTICED BY THE INTERVIEWEES (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

Almost all of these sports are Olympic sports, which allow the athletes to partake in the Summer Olympic Games. The only exception is orienteering, which is a non-Olympic sport (Olympic Games, 2019). The sports they practice, correspond to the following classification of Swiss Olympic:

Swiss Olympic sport category	Number of national federation
Category one	five
Category two	three
Category three	one
Category four	one

TABLE 5: SPORTS BY CATEGORY (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

The partakers attend a total of ten different tertiary education Institutes in Switzerland:

Universities	Number of students
Bern University of Applied Sciences	three
Lucerne University of Teacher Education	one
University of Applied Sciences Chur	one
University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland	one
University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland	one
University of Basel	one
University of Fribourg	three
University of Lausanne	one
University of Lugano	one
University of Zurich	three

TABLE 6: LIST OF THE UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED BY THE STUDENTS (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that a total of ten different programs are attended:

Program	Number of students
Architecture	one
Business & Communication	two
Business Studies / Administration	three
Economics	two
French	one
History	one
Industrial Engineering and Management Science	one
Medicine	two
Sport studies	one
Teaching – Diploma for secondary Level	one

TABLE 7: LIST OF THE PROGRAMS ATTENDED BY THE STUDENTS (SOURCE: OTTAVIA BOSELLO, 2019)

Lastly, it is important to explain that all the sixteen interviewees are currently attending their Bachelor-Studies. None of them is currently obtaining a Master or a PhD.

4.4 TRANSFORMATION OF THE DATA – CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMISATION & TRANSCRIPTION

Dunn (2007: 170) claims that the quantity of data produced from interviews is impossible to analyse if it is not converted into a text. For this reason, it was decided to transcribe the recordings of the interviews at the first opportunity so that, as suggested by Longhurst (2010: 110), with the interview being still vivid in mind it might be easier to understand and remember what was said. The choice can be considered helpful for the entire process. In fact, it slightly reduced the difficulties related to the transcription of the interviews which were in three different languages. In having chosen to apply a **verbatim transcription**²⁵, audio-records have been transcribed word for word, exactly as words were spoken (Mack et al., 2015: 111), meaning that the result is an (almost) exact reproduction of the speech that happened (Witcher, 2010: 123; Oliver et al., 2005: 1274). Adjustments were made by correcting swear words²⁶, and editing personal names of participants.

Pseudonyms (Gratton and Jones, 2004: 112) were assigned to the each interviewee based on their subgroups and not the sport they practice, in order to achieve a great level of **anonymity**²⁷ and **confidentiality**²⁸ and their privacy preserved (Flick, 2007: 69). With gender being the focus of this research, it was reasonable to base the pseudonyms on the two subgroups. In this research anonymity was particularly important (Sauders et al., 2015: 619) because the respondents had shared personal and sensitive information about a great number of various participants involved in the system: they shared information about themselves, other team members, institutions, sport federations, team and/or national coaches and so on. Anonymity was particularly challenging because it was difficult to protect their identities, preserve the value and the integrity of the data that were collected and analysed (Sauders et al., 2015: 618). This led to two ethical problems related to qualitative methodologies.

The first serious point is called **internal confidentiality** (Tolich, 2014 cited by Sauders et al., 2015: 615) or **deductive disclosure** (Kaiser, 2009: 1632). It could occur when some traits of individuals (or even groups) are recognisable or when some narratives told by the participants may lead to their identification (Keiser, 2009: 1632) by other participants

²⁵ Defined as “transformation of recorded materials (conversations, interviews, visual materials, etc.) into text in order to analyse it” (Flick, 2018: 120).

²⁶ I decided to correct swear words to maintain a certain decency and formality in my Master thesis.

²⁷ Anonymity is defined as “one form of confidentiality – that of keeping participants’ identities secret (...) a person will never be traceable from the data presented about them.” (Sauders et al., 2015: 617).

²⁸ “Confidentiality also includes keeping private what is said by the participants, something only achievable through researchers choosing not to share parts of the data “(ibidem).

involved. To this there is the risk of **external confidentiality**, where other people with whom they had contact (directly or indirectly) and who know about their double career might be able to identify them. That might mean that everyone who is close to the research field, such as trainers, chefs, families, SUSF-collaborators, Swiss Olympic-collaborators, admission office, and so on could be able to potentially recognize them (Sauders et al., 2015: 618). It is in fact, supposed that within the teams and the national teams it is well known who studies alongside sport. Potentially at Student Advisory Offices, at Dean's Offices and professors could know whose athlete-students are currently studying at their institute. In this case, where a small population is taken into consideration, and where a snowball effect was implied (Sauders et al., 2015: 619) this risk can not be completely erased, but the possible has been done in order to avoid these problems. As previously explained, to ensure their privacy, pseudonyms based on gender were given and personal information were erased. To avoid the possibility of recognizing whose citations were used and to minimize the risk of identifying the participants, it was decided not to explicitly compare what male and female participants who practice the same sport said. This would also prevent the possibility that some participants might recognize themselves in what others had said about them (Sauders et al., 2015: 619). To this it needs to be added that in this being a research with only sixteen interviews it would be impossible to draw reliable conclusions about a single sport because the number of participants for each specific sport is too few and potentially not representative of the actual situation in the specific sport.

The second ethical problem can be identified as **shadowed data**²⁹ reported by the participants, such as direct references to other athletes quoted by the athlete-students have not been edited because this information was considered as non threatening for the identity of the respondents and because the citations of others athletes did not imply that the cited ones were also the athletes-students that took part to the study. These decisions assured a "clean" data set (Kaiser, 2009: 1635). In fact, no sensitive information on the respondents were included (ibidem). This type of (shadowed) data is relevant because it gave insight on the extent of the phenomenon and a bigger spectrum of experiences, anomalies, differences and equivalence to take into consideration, so that the discussion of the results could be richer.

Lastly, it is important to specify that during the process of transcription the interviews some symbols were used to indicate a certain number of nonverbal data. It was decided to transcribe only utterances such as laughter, response/non response tokens (e.g. ehm, mmm,

²⁹ Shadowed are defined in this research as the "addition to talking about (their) own experience, participants may discuss the experience of others, how their own experience resembles or differs from others, and why" (Morse, 2000: 4).

pfiuu, etc.) and the length of the pauses, which were considered as potentially useful for the analysis (cf. Annex 06 - Transposing notations). In doing so a **denaturalized transcription** was applied. In doing a content analysis the principal interest of the researcher were meanings, perceptions, experiences (Oliver et al., 2005: 1277) and consequently applying a naturalized transcript, in which utterances (coughs, sneezing, stuttering, sniffing, intonation, accents, and so on), are transposed, would have created delays and it would have potentially complicated the meanings and the substance of the interviews, leading to a misleading analysis (Oliver et al. 2005: 1276). For this reason it was decided to apply a selection of non-verbal data to transpose and the one that were not included are the ones considered as not relevant for the study. In fact, the specifics of the communication that happened are not central for this study, the informational content is (Oliver et al., 2005: 1286).

4.5 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA – CODING

The coding³⁰ of the data is central for the reduction of the collected data because it allows both the organization of the raw data into categories (Gratton et Jones, 2004: 218; Cope, 2010: 448) and the identification of patterns and new connections (Cope, 2010: 448). Furthermore, it allows the data to be placed in a logical structure (Gratton et Jones, 2004: 219; Cope, 2010: 448). For this step of the research it was decided to undergo a **computer aided qualitative data analysis** (CAQDAS) and not to conduct it manually because computer analysis has the potential to “both facilitate and enhance the indexing and retrieval process, by enabling you to index a large (sometimes unlimited) number of categories, more efficiently than you could by hand.” (Mason, 2002: 151). More in detail, to conduct the coding process of the interviews’ transcript it was used a computer program called MAXQDA allowed the coded quotes to be scanned for each individual code. In conducting a content analysis this feature allowed easy access to all the quotes, which were used for the discussion of the results. A downside can be found in the fact that in selecting the coded quotes, the context in which they have been said could potentially be lost (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 225).

As it relates the coding process, a first **code system** was determined prior to the analysis of the interviews. However, in this research it was applied an **iterative coding process** (Waitt, 2010: 232). That means that the initial code system changed and was not the same as the final one (Cope, 2010: 448). In fact, it was updated alongside the research: some codes have been erased, others have been added and others modified or separated in order to create more detailed ones (ibidem). This was done to allow to the organization of the information

³⁰ Coding is here defined as the process of labelling pieces of collected data (Flick, 2007: 115).

into appropriate categories and the creation of trends, which would be theoretically important and which would grant to answer the research questions (ibidem). It is important to note that the transcripts were coded and the codes were grouped according to the themes of the research because the codes had to be a reflection of what was being researched (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 219). Consequently, in the research the coding process can be considered as dynamic as well as fluid (Cope, 2010: 448).

4.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA – CONTENT ANALYSIS

Due to the fact that the methods that are chosen for a research have to reflect its objectives and its research question, for the examination of the data a content analysis was applied. A content analysis is generated through the implication of a systematic procedure that allows a systematic and consistent analysis of the content of the communications that happened (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 167). This procedure implies a work with the themes and the categories that have been generated during the previous step of the analysis (the coding), which allows a comparison between messages and meanings which is generated by the interviews and that consequently could be implied to develop the main topics and results of a research (Cope, 2010: 448).

As argued by Neuendorf (2011: 276), this type of analysis is specifically useful in the field of gender related researches, that involve both female and male subjects because it grants the chance to compare perceptions, messages and meanings generated by both men and women about sex and gender roles.

In this research both latent and manifest content was researched and analysed. The **manifest content** can be defined as the elements that were directly identifiable. “Latent content” were the elements that are implied within the communications (Neuendorf, 2011: 282). The choice to conduct an analysis of both was taken because it grants a trustworthy body of analysis and consistent results. Keeping in this mind, the decision was made to conduct a **latent content analysis**. As explained by Dunn (2017: 175), this type of analysis of interview texts requires the identification of the underlying meanings of what the participant has said. Following this choice, the decision was made to imply an **interpretative content analysis**, which “is specially designed for latent content analysis, in which researchers go beyond quantifying the most straightforward denotative elements in a text” (Ahuvia 2001: 139). Drisko & Maschi (2016) suggest that an interpretative content analysis allows an exploration of the latent meaning of the data and consequently to have a more detailed description of the collected data. It allows the researcher to interfere on the feelings, the thoughts of the interviewee and their reactions to systems, services and policies. After evaluating this strategy with the objectives of the master thesis and its research questions,

this strategy was considered as the more suitable to obtain a good analysis of the collected data.

While implying latent content and applying a latent content analysis it is important to pay attention to (inter)subjectivity and objectivity (Neuendorf, 2011: 282). In fact, content analysis “involves the researcher determining the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words or concepts within the text” (Gratton & Jones, 2004: 167) and the measurement of latent constructs is subjective, relying “on coder interpretation of content meaning.” (Neuendorf, 2011: 282).

5 BEING A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE-STUDENT IN SWITZERLAND

In this next chapter the results of the research are thematically and critically presented and discussed. In this part of the work, direct quotes from the interviews are employed in order to achieve both a better understanding of the system and to achieve the deduction of their arguments. At first, I expose the reason which lead Swiss professional athlete-students to undergo a dual career. I then examine the Swiss sport system and the Swiss education system, in order to better understand both the actual support granted to the athletes-students and the challenges they face while conducting a dual career.

5.1 EXPLAINING THE CHOICE TO COMBINE SPORT WITH STUDIES

Participants explain how professional sport is, in Switzerland, financially unsustainable as a "lifetime-job", leading them to have to combine it with a second career in order to be able to grant themselves a future.

" (...) It is not possible to make a living from sport (...) for this reason it is clear, that you cannot just do professional sport, but you need something else (...) so that you can maybe have some sort of security later." ³¹ (M01)

" (...) in Switzerland you cannot live from sport, it's too complicated (...), which means that you need to think about the future." ³² (W06)

" (...) it's not like you can live (from sport). You can maybe be a professional athlete for five years (...), it's not like you have made enough money to live out of it." ³³ (M04)

They reason that they choose to combine their professional sports careers with an academic career instead of combining it with a job because studying grants them a greater flexibility compared to that which they would have while working.

" (...) with the studies I can better combine my sport. If you work you are more constrained (...)." ³⁴ (W05)

³¹ (...) kann man nicht vom Sport leben (...), deshalb ist es auch klar, dass man nicht nur auf Sport setzen kann, sondern auch wie was nebenher haben muss, (...) dann vielleicht habe ich später wie eine Sicherheit.

³² (...) en Suisse on peut pas vivre de sport, enfin c'est vraiment trop compliqué. (...) Il faut penser à l'avenir du coup.

³³ (...) non è che vivi [di sport].. Magari fai cinque anni di professionismo (...) non è che ti fai i soldi per la vita.

³⁴ (...) mit dem Studium konnte ich am besten spielen daneben. Mit einer Arbeit bist du daneben, ehm, eingeschränkt (...).

“I think that in being (...) half student-half athlete it is better than part-time work, because (...) either you have a perfect employer, or the university would in any case be more flexible.”³⁵ (W06)

It should also be added that they perceive that having a degree would make it possible for them to work right after the end of the professional sport career, as having a degree seems to be an easy way to get a job later on.

“(...) nowadays you have to study, because if you have not studied, it will be hard, (...) having a degree is a great basis [for a job].”³⁶ (W04)

“(...) being (...) half student-half athlete (...) would grant you the chance to do sport, to have a degree and maybe find a job.”³⁷ (W06)

At this point, a (major) reason, which leads Swiss professional athletes to choose to conduct a dual career as athlete-student seem to be identified. Next, I will present the evaluation of the athletes about the support they receive from the Swiss education system and the Swiss sport system

5.2 THE SUPPORT TO ATHLETE-STUDENTS IN THE SWISS EDUCATION AND SPORT SYSTEM: AN EVALUATION

5.2.1 EVALUATING THE SUPPORT AT THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM

The participants explain how, in order to balance their two careers, some specific adjustments during their studies are necessary, because without them it would be almost impossible to pursue the two careers simultaneously.

“They made some concessions to me, I thought «yeah, [without arrangements], it will be hard combining it with sport».”³⁸ (W03)

“(...) if I had to do my Bachelor exactly as any other student, it would not be possible[to combine sport with it].”³⁹ (W02)

³⁵ moi je pense qu'en étant (...) demi étudiant - demi sportive c'est toujours mieux que travailler à moitié, parce que (...), au moins de tomber sur ce parfait, l'université sera tout à fait plus flexible

³⁶ (...), heutzutage du musst fast studieren, weil wenn du dein Studium nicht hast, jetzt ist es schwierig, (...) ein Studium ist wie eine gute, gute Grundlage [für einen Job].

³⁷ (...) en étant (...) demi étudiante - demi sportive (...) ça permet de faire son sport, d'arriver à avoir un diplôme et peut être un travail.

³⁸ Sie kamen mir sehr entgegen, weil ich dachte « ja, [ohne Vereinbarung], das ist schwierig mit meinem Sport ».

³⁹ (...) se io avessi dovuto fare un Bachelor esattamente come tutti gli altri, non sarebbe stato possibile [combinare lo sport].

They explicitly recognize differences in the support of professional athletes-students and explain how it varies among tertiary institutes:

“I think that (the support) can differ (...). There are universities or schools that support professional sport, which have also special offices, (...) where it is not a problem if you cannot make it to an exam or if you want to postpone it, they support you. Or again, which are really interested in you being successful in both of them, and there are other cases, where it does not matter to them, because they think that «we have the other students» and do not want you.”⁴⁰ (W04)

“(...) there are big differences (in the compatibility between sport and school) among universities, Universities of Applied Sciences and so on.”⁴¹ (W05)

They then reason that in (most of) the Swiss universities the priority is education:

“(...) the priority of a University is always academia and performance, then sport in second place.”⁴² (M03)

“With (professional) sport that does not work well, but it is also not the priority of the University.”⁴³ (W03)

Additionally⁸, they clarify how gender does not have an influence among the adjustments granted to the professional athletes-students.

“In the studies (...) there are not big differences between men and women. There are not advantages or disadvantages in being either a man or a woman.”⁴⁴ (M06)

“I don't think that in relation to the conditions to study [there is differences among gender].”⁴⁵ (W01)

⁴⁰ (...) ich denke, dass [die Unterstützung] sehr unterschiedlich ist. Also, (...) es gibt, (...) es gibt Universitäten oder Schulen die Spitzensport recht unterstützen oder so, die eigenen Dienst haben, ehm, (...) oder wo es kein Problem ist, wenn du fehlst oder Prüfungen verschieben musst und dich unterstützen. Oder dass auch daran interessiert sind dass du die beide erfolgreich schließen kannst. Und dann gibt es andere Schulen wo es ihr ist total egal ist, weil sie finden «ja wir haben die anderen» und sie wollen dich gar nicht.

⁴¹ (...) es gibt halt sehr viele Unterschiede [in der Kompatibilität zwischen Sport und Schule] zwischen Fachhochschulen, Universitäten und so weiter.

⁴² (...) die Priorität der Uni ist immer noch Akademie und Leistung. Und Sport ist zweiter Rang.

⁴³ Das mit dem [Spitzen]sport, klappt es noch nicht, aber ist es auch nicht die erste Priorität der Uni.

⁴⁴ Eigentlich wenn es um Studium es bezieht. (...) da werden eigentlich nicht großen Unterschieden in dem Sinn gemacht. Es gibt nicht ein Vorteil oder Nachteil ein Mann oder eine Frau zu sein.

⁴⁵ Au niveau des conditions pour les études je ne pense pas [qu'il y aille différences entre genres].

Something they recognize has an influence on being granted a set of adjustments, is the fact that being a Swiss Olympic Card-holder (Swiss Olympic Card Gold, Silver, Bronze or Elite) seems to be the prerequisite to be granted alterations.

“(…) I have the status of “professional athlete”, (…) I have given them the Swiss Olympic Card (…).”⁴⁶ (M01)

“(…) when you are a professional athlete and you have the Swiss Olympic Card (…) you can take more time for your university studies.”⁴⁷ (W02)

In greater detail, professional athlete-students very often suggest that their tertiary institute grants them a prolongation of their studies, allowing more semesters to complete their studies. This concession has been evaluated as a very helpful one. It is important to note that they have mentioned multiple lengths of the prolongation granted, and how it seems to be the Dean’s Office which mostly makes the decision about the concession of the extension of semesters they receive.

“(…) I have written to the Dean’s Office and they replied that by having the Swiss Olympic Card (…) I could go on (…) without deadlines.”⁴⁸ (W03)

“I can take seven years (to finish my Bachelor], that’s a concession which they give me - instead of five years, seven years.”⁴⁹ (M04)

“I have (…) [for my studies], like unlimited time. That’s really helpful.”⁵⁰ (W03)

⁴⁶ (….) ich habe den Status Spitzensportler, (…), ich habe einfach die Swiss Olympic Karte gegeben (…).

⁴⁷ (….) se sei sportivo d’élite e hai una carta Swiss Olympic (….) puoi fare più tranquillamente il tuo percorso universitario

⁴⁸ (….) ich habe dem Dekanat geschrieben und sie meinten, ja, da ich diese Swiss Olympic Card habe (…), ich konnte so weiter machen (…) ohne Fristen.

⁴⁹ Posso arrivare fino a sette anni [per finire il mio Bachelor], quella è una condizione che mi viene data come sportivo, al posto di cinque, sette anni.

⁵⁰ (….) ich habe so wie eigentlich unbegrenzt Zeit dafür [für meinen Studium]. Das ist ein riesen Plus.

With regards to the conceded adjustments to them, they identify the possibility to skip an exam in cases where they cannot attend, and to take missed exams during the next session. They normally cite the possibility of taking it in the session held in August/September. The interviewees have critically evaluated this point. On the one hand, it has been defined as a great opportunity.

“(…) in January I could not take an exam, because I had a World Cup tournament, and there is a repetition-exam in, like, summer for the people who did not pass and I had the chance to take it and I have taken it there.”⁵¹ (W08).

“You can postpone it, when you have an important competition. (...), they have another one in fall (...) for the ones who did not pass, and you can either retake an exam or simply postpone it then.”⁵² (W07)

On the other hand, some participants have critically analysed the nature of this extra session. It has been explained how in some cases the postponed exam would directly count as a second attempt, as well as how in some other cases a (non-clarity of count of the exam)?? could be detected. Meaning that it would not always be clear whether it would count as a first or a second attempt.

“It could be that you can go to the repetition-session. You just take the exam at that time, but there is then the question of whether it counts as the first try or if it is already the second one.”⁵³ (W08)

“(…) I can also skip an exam and then take it in August. But normally in August it is like a second chance. And if in January I cannot be there, and I need a second chance in August, I do not have it.”⁵⁴ (W05)

⁵¹ (...) in Januar, hatte ich eine Prüfung nicht schreiben können, weil ich gleichzeitig Weltcup turnier hatte, und dann gibt es noch einen Repetitionstermin quasi im Sommer für denen die es nicht bestanden haben und da konnte ich die Prüfung einfach dort nachschreiben.

⁵² Man kann es verschieben, wenn man einen wichtigen Wettkampf hat. (...) sie haben im Herbst noch eine (...) für die, die nicht bestanden haben und entweder kann man es dort machen oder man kann es einfach verschieben.

⁵³ Es könnte sein, dass man die Nachholungsprüfung, einfach dort in Nachholtermin geht, ehm, aber es ist dann immer die Frage zählt das als erster Versuch oder ist es schon der zweiter Versuch.

⁵⁴ (...) ich kann auch die Prüfungen fehlen und es danach in August machen. Aber im August ist es normalerweise wie eine zweite Chance. Und wenn ich im Januar nicht da bin und im August die zweite Chance brauche, habe ich keine zweite Chance.

In addition, it has also been explained that postponing or retaking an exam during the August/September-session is a condition normally granted to every student attending a Swiss university.

“(...) we have a back-up data, I mean in the repetition-session. Which takes place in June instead of August I think. I do this sometimes. But that is a standard condition, everyone can do it.”⁵⁵ (W03)

“The school offers a regular week for the exams and then another one in autumn, which would be like week 3, for the ones that have not passed an exam, and we can postpone our exams until that session.”⁵⁶ (W07)

Another point discussed by the participants in relation to the support granted to them, would be flexibility of the data of the exams. In these cases, they explain how it is the Dean's Office, which makes decisions in this sense, and the potential dependency has also been recognized on the goodwill and interest in sport of the Faculty Management.

“I went (...) to Dean's Office and I have asked if there were any possibility to influence the data of the exams (...) But I think it so not always this way, that the Faculty Manager has so much goodwill.”⁵⁷ (M07)

“There are people who really understand and really support, and people who do not. (...) There are people who understand that less. But I think that these are people that mostly do not have that much of interest in sport.”⁵⁸ (W05)

In more detail, the flexibility has been identified by the athlete-students as a critical point of the Swiss system. The majority of them explain how they do not have the possibility to take the exam on other dates, other than the one for all the other students.

“(...) I have to follow dates and the regulation of my program. Meaning that, for example, I cannot, take the exams on some other dates.”⁵⁹ (W01)

⁵⁵ (...) wir haben ein Ausweichdatum, einfach in der Wiederholungssession. Die statt dann in Juni ende August [stattfindet], glaube ich. Das mache ich ab und zu. Aber das ist eigentlich, ja, normale Vorgabe, dass können auch anderen machen.

⁵⁶ Sie haben auch eine Prüfungswoche die regulären und sie haben noch im Herbst noch eine. Es ist dann die Prüfungswoche 3 quasi, für die, die nicht bestanden haben und entweder kann man es dort machen oder man kann es einfach verschieben.

⁵⁷ Ich bin (...) zum Studiumsleiter gegangen und ich habe gesagt, ob er irgendwie die Prüfungen ein bisschen beeinflussen konnte, (...) Aber ich glaube das ist nicht sehr (...) es ist nicht sehr selbstverständlich also, dass es so viel Goodwill gibt von, vom Studiengangsleiter her.

⁵⁸ Es gibt Leute die es mega verstehen und mega unterstützen und Leute nicht. (...) Es gibt Leute die weniger verstehen. Aber ich glaube es sind Leute, vor allem sind es Leute die nicht so mit Sport so viel zu tun haben (...).

“For the date of the exams it does not change anything.”⁶⁰ (W02)

As a matter of fact, they outline the necessity for them to take the exam on another date and call for improvements in this direction, namely on the flexibility of the exams.

“(…) maybe to be able to take the exams like a week later, because maybe the week before I’m still at a training camp (…).”⁶¹ (M01)

“The possibility to change the date of an exam would be great (…).”⁶² (M04)

“(…) it would be great to have more flexibility (…) especially with the exams.”⁶³ (M08)

Nonetheless, in this regard, some of them recognize the difficulties, which could come in the organization of this arrangement.

“The exams are strict with the dates, you cannot do much about it, also because are enormous multiple choice-exams with hundreds of people.”⁶⁴ (M08)

“Maybe it would be complicated for organizational reasons, but for professional athletes it would be ideal (to be able to change the date of an exam).”⁶⁵ (W02)

As it relates, the arrangements needed in the case of conflicts of training and competitions with laboratories and internships, they have been identified as the responsibility of the Dean’s office. The participants positively evaluate the outcomes of their collaboration/discussion with the Faculty management.

“(…) the Dean’s Office has always helped me, when they could, (…) like in the case of internships (…).”⁶⁶ (W08)

⁵⁹ (….) je dois toujours, toujours rester dans les, les dates et les règles d’études. Ça veut dire que, par exemple je ne peux pas, changer la date des examens (…).

⁶⁰ Per le date degli esami non cambia niente.

⁶¹ (….) die Prüfungen vielleicht eine Woche später schreiben zu können, weil ich vielleicht eine Woche davor noch im Trainingslager bin.

⁶² La possibilità di spostare esami sarebbe la cosa migliore (…).

⁶³ (….) ein bisschen mehr Flexibilität sich zu wünschen wäre. (….) halt grad mit den Prüfungen.

⁶⁴ die Prüfungen sind extrem strikt mit den Daten. Da kann man wenig machen, eigentlich, halt weil es so (….) große *multiple choice* sind mit hunderten Leuten (…).

⁶⁵ Poi magari diventa complicato, sono più cose per l’organizzazione, però credo che per gli sportivi d’élite sarebbe ideale [poter cambiare le date degli esami].

⁶⁶ (….) das Dekanat, war immer sehr entgegenkommend in den Rahmen wo sie überhaupt können (….) so Praktika (…).

“(...) they granted me the possibility to postpone the internship”.⁶⁷ (M02)

With regards to attendance at the university, they explain how it is complicated for an athlete-student to (always) participate in classes where compulsory presence is required. They also reason that this takes a great deal of planning.

“When you have a course with compulsory presence, you have to make sure to be at the university(...)”.⁶⁸ (W03)

“(...) I had to take a couple of classes, compulsory-courses, where I had the right to miss, I think two times. That was challenging, I had to plan with the training camps, so that I would not be away too much.”⁶⁹ (M06)

While comparing the different types of Swiss university, students of University of Teacher Education and Universities of Applied Science, participants define compulsory presence as particularly challenging for them and have argued that for students of Universities it could be easier to combine the two careers because they do not have neither internships nor compulsory presence .

“(...) at a University of Teacher Education there are a lot of compulsory presence classes and internships and these are really hard to do for a professional athlete.”⁷⁰ (M06)

“(...) if you are studying at a university of applied sciences (...) and you have the compulsory presence, as a professional athlete it could be challenging, right? (...)”.⁷¹ (M07)

“(...) if you go to a university it is easier. (...) there is not compulsory presence. If you have compulsory presence it is more challenging.”⁷² (M02)

⁶⁷ (...) mi hanno concesso, che (...) spostato lo stage.

⁶⁸ Teilweise wenn du ein Seminar hast mit Anwesenheit-Pflicht, muss du mal schauen dass du an der Uni bist (...).

⁶⁹ (...) es gab schon ein, zwei Seminare die man machen musste, Pflicht-Seminare, und, da gibt es halt höchstens, glaube ich zwei Abwesenheiten, die man haben kann. Das war dann zum Teil ein bisschen schwierig, musste ich halt planen, mit den Trainingslagern, dass ich nicht, konstant weg bin.

⁷⁰ (...) an einer PH es gibt noch viele Präsenzpflicht und Praktika und die sind noch sehr schwer zu machen für, für einen Spitzensportler.

⁷¹ (...) wenn du natürlich an einer Fachhochschule (...) Anwesenheit Pflicht hast, dann ist es natürlich als Spitzensportler auch schwierig oder? (...).

Regarding compulsory presence, in most cases, the professors have been identified by the participants as responsible for the decision of flexibility of compulsory attendance requests. In some other cases the decision seems to be made by the dean's office. It has also been suggested that the flexibility conceded to the athlete-students might be related to the personal interest of the professors in sport.

"[the compulsory presence] is something you discuss directly with the professor." ⁷³
(W07)

"(...) they always give the responsibility to individual professors. If they are, ehm, passionate about sport, they are more willing to help you with the compulsory presences, (...) if they are not passionate about it, you can do nothing." ⁷⁴ (M05)

"I can miss more than the others. (...) I have to write a letter to the Dean's Office, in which I say that I am not going to be there and I have to submit it with plenty of notice." ⁷⁵ (W05)

Participants have also explained how the possibility to have the materials used in class might vary among professors and their flexibility. This has been recognized as challenging.

"There are professors, which give the papers in class and then there are other, which upload everything in internet. It is really varied (...)." ⁷⁶ (W05)

"If you are in class or not, it is your problem. It is really this way." ⁷⁷ (W06)

Another point, which the interviewees critically evaluate, is the guidance/accompaniment during their studies. In a couple of cases, they identify the presence of a person responsible for the professional athlete-students. In these cases, they also explain how the professors knows that there are professional athletes at their classes.

⁷² (...) se per esempio vai ad un'università è facile. Se dici "guardate qui non ci sono" e non c'è l'obbligo di presenza, è poi un tuo problema . cioè nel senso studi. Ma quando hai la presenza obbligatoria è un po' più un problema.

⁷³ [die Präsenzpflicht], das sprichst du mit den Dozent ab.

⁷⁴ (...) geben sie immer die Verantwortung an jeden einzelnen Dozent. Wenn der Dozent, ehm sportfreundlich ist, kommt er dir entgegen mit der Präsenzpflicht (...), wenn nicht, kann man nichts machen.

⁷⁵ (...) ich kann mehr fehlen als die anderen. (...) ich muss einfach für die Präsidentin einen Brief unterschreiben lassen, dass ich nicht da bin und ich muss es genug früh ihnen zeigen.

⁷⁶ Es gibt Lehrern die verteilen alles und es gibt Lehrern die alles auf Internet alles teilen. Es kommt ganz darauf an (...)

⁷⁷ Si on n'est pas au cours, on n'est pas au cours. C'est notre problème. C'est vraiment ça.

“There is a coordinator, meaning that she is responsible for professional athletes and we plan my studies together.”⁷⁸ (M07)

“(...) it is communicated to the professors, that we have like a special status as professional athletes.”⁷⁹ (W07)

On the contrary, in most cases they identify the lack of a person responsible for them, who would help them, for example, to plan their studies. They explain how they would wish for the existence of this role and with regards to this, a further suggestion which has been advanced by the athlete-students is better communication from the university to the professor about the presence of professional athletes in their classes.

“[It lacks] a person responsible for the professional athletes.”⁸⁰ (W05)

“[It would be great to have] a person responsible, with whom you can sit down and plan your studies.”⁸¹ (M06)

“There is no communication between the university and the professors. I mean, I think they should announce to them «there will be professional athletes in your class». But they do not do it. This leads sometimes to some complicated situations, but most of the time the professors are relatively understanding.”⁸² (W02)

In this chapter has been shown how different degrees of flexibility and different resources and conditions are conceded to the participants. This seems to vary not only from institute to institute, but might also be related to the understanding about their dual career by the people involved, and also by their personal interest in sport.

⁷⁸ [es gibt eine] Koordinatorin, das heißt, sie ist für die Spitzensportler zuständig und sie schaut jeweils die Semesterplanung an mit uns (...).

⁷⁹ (...) also es wird kommuniziert (an den Professoren), man hat wirklich wie einen speziellen Status als Spitzensportler.

⁸⁰ [Fehlt] eine Kontakt-Person halt für die Sportler (...).

⁸¹ [es wäre super] eine Betreuungsperson zu haben, mit der man mal zusammensitzt und irgendwie so zusammen eine Planung macht.

⁸² Non c'è neanche una comunicazione tra l'università e i docenti. Nel senso, secondo me dovrebbero annunciarci a questo programma sportivi « ci sono queste persone che sono dentro e che seguiranno i vostri corsi ». Invece non lo fanno. Quindi, a volte ci sono situazioni un po' più complicate che si vengono a creare, ehm, però, in linea di massima i docenti sono abbastanza comprensivi anche.

5.2.2 EVALUATING THE SUPPORT BY THE SWISS SPORT SYSTEM

With regards to the national sport federations and their (team and/or national⁸³) coaches, the interviewees have made a critical evaluation. Differences can be recognized in the evaluation they make of the support they receive from federations and the (team and/or national) coaches. On the one hand some participants have reasoned, that the (team and/or national) coaches and the federation understand the unsustainability of the professional sport career in Switzerland and the fact that they must also study.

“They understand that we have to study, (...) because in the long-term you cannot make a living out of sport.”⁸⁴ (W08)

“(...) it is crystal clear to the federation (...) that the best solution is (...) the combination with school.”⁸⁵ (M08)

“(...) [the coaches] they know that in Switzerland you cannot make a living from this sport.”⁸⁶ (W08)

In some cases, professional athlete-student explain, how their federations and their (team and/or national) coaches help them in case of need; as, for example, with the justifications requested by their tertiary institutes in case of prolonged absences.

“(...) In the federation they are cool. I mean. They help us; if we need help we can discuss with them at it all goes smoothly.”⁸⁷ (W06)

“I once needed a justification, I could call directly and say «coach please» or whomever, «please could you write a text, or I will write » and they sign it.”⁸⁸ (W08)

On the other hand, in some other cases, it has also been argued that not all the (team and/or national) coaches understand the unsustainability of professional sport and the need to conduct a dual career.

⁸³ At this regard it has to be clarified that not every athlete has both a team and a national coaches. In some cases of individual sports, are directly the national coaches that train them.

⁸⁴ (...) sie haben schon Verständnis dafür, dass man studiert, überhaupt (...), weil langfristig kann man nicht davon leben.

⁸⁵ (...) [es] ist dem Verband völlig klar und (...) die beste Lösung, dass man hat (...), halt, ist die Vereinbarkeit von Schule (...).

⁸⁶ (...) [die Trainer] sie wissen, dass man in der Schweiz die Karte nicht nur auf diesen Sport setzen kann.

⁸⁷ (...) avec la fédération ils sont vraiment cools. (...). Ils nous aident, si on a besoin d'aide on peut aller discuter et ça passe bien.

⁸⁸ [Wenn] ich eine Dispense brauchte, dann konnte ich direkt anrufen und sagen „bitte, Trainerin oder wer noch immer, schreib mir einen Text oder ich schreibe einen Text vor“ und die unterschreiben es direkt.

“(...) some coaches do not understand so well that in Switzerland we cannot only do sport.”⁸⁹ (W06)

“Most coaches understand [the dual career] (...).”⁹⁰ (M07)

Similarly, some of the participants perceive their sport career as the only interest of their federation, even if, as athlete-students, they also have an academic career to combine with professional sport.

“(...) I am supported by my federation, but I also see that they have other priorities. They just consider my sporting career. While I also have my education to think about.”⁹¹ (W03)

“The federation is just interested in my sport results. The rest, they don’t care about it.”⁹² (W05)

Moreover, interviewees highlight the fact that they are often bounded to the planning of the federations and coaches, which can be at times challenging for them due to their dual career.

“The trainer plans for the whole team.(...) But I also have school, this is a bit challenging for me.”⁹³ (M07)

“(...) if the time of a training changes last minute, or something like that, it can be challenging.”⁹⁴ (M06)

⁸⁹ (...) certains des entraîneurs comprennent moins (...) bien qu'en Suisse on peut pas que faire du sport.

⁹⁰ Die Trainer haben am meisten Verständnis dafür (...).

⁹¹ (...) ich werde unterstützt vom Verband, aber ich merke schon dass sie sowie andere Prioritäten setzen. Also, sie erfassen sich nur mit meinem sportlichen Lebensabschnitt, während ich halt noch an meine Ausbildung denke.

⁹² Der Verband ist nur auf die sportlichen Resultaten interessiert. Der Rest, der Rest eigentlich nicht.

⁹³ Der Trainer macht einen Plan für das ganze Team, (...) aber ich muss auch in der Schule gehen (...) das ist einfach ein bisschen die Schwierigkeit.

⁹⁴ (...) wenn spontan Trainingszeiten geändert werden, oder so, zum Teil ein bisschen schwierig.

In relation to the planning of their dual career, they also explain how they have to plan their two careers personally, in a sense that the federation and the coaches plan for everyone, and they have to decide themselves how best to manage to be there, and at the same time to not miss anything at the university.

“(...) you are bound by the trainings and everything, you have to organize yourself, with the planning. For example, the planning of our tournaments with the national team came relatively late, (...) and it was challenging because you cannot plan your semester just there, or you just cannot cancel your subscription to a course.”⁹⁵ (M06)

“(...) in the national team, they say «you have to postpone» and the dates are fixed, so. Yes. There, there is less understanding. They think, that you have to sort things out yourself for school, and you are responsible as to how you get your degree.”⁹⁶ (W07)

In few cases the top-performance-athletes interviewed elicit the perception that, even if the (team and/or national) coaches and the federations seem to understand and accept their double career, but only to the degree that it does not negatively influence their sports career and the success they can bring to the nation.

“(...) often they would prefer if sport would be our priority and that we would study as little possible(...).”⁹⁷ (W04)

“(...) they understand really well, that we have to study, they say «wow, you must absolutely study», but only in a measure in which you can be still a part of the national team. That’s the problem.”⁹⁸ (W08)

“I think that their interest is on my sport career and not in other things. (...) They do not forbid us to study, but they are more interested in us being successful, so that the federation can be successful.”⁹⁹ (M05)

⁹⁵ (...) man ist schon eingebunden. Die Trainings und alles, aber muss man schon selber schauen, ehm, mit der Planung, zum Beispiel. Das war so etwas, die, die Turniere, die Angebote kamen, die Angeboten von der Nationalmannschaft kamen relativ knapp zum Teil, (...) das war mal halt schwierig, weil die Semesterplanung, oder man kann nicht (...) Vorlesung umkehren.

⁹⁶ (...) ich finde von der Nationalmannschaft, dass sie sagen einfach „wir müssen verschieben“ und die Daten sind noch fix, so. Ja. Dort gibt es weniger, also Verständnis. Sie denken einfach, eben halt von der Schule du muss selber schauen, wie du zu deinem Zeug kommst.

⁹⁷ (...) häufig hätten sie auch gerne, dass Sport ganz klar im Vordergrund steht und du so wenig wie möglich studierst (...).

⁹⁸ (...) haben sie voll Verständnis dafür, aber so zu sagen, es ist nicht langfristig gedacht, (...), sie sagen „wow, du musst unbedingt eine Ausbildung machen“, aber nur in den Maßnahmen, dass man dann noch in die Nationalmannschaft gehen kann. Also das ist ein bisschen das, das Problem.

With regards to the flexibility conceded to them in the case of conflict between sport and academic degree, the interviewees explain also how choice is directly and individually discussed with the (national and/or team) coaches.

“In my case (...) everything related to school is discussed directly with the coach and not in the federation. And it’s discussed individually with every athlete.”¹⁰⁰ (W04)

“You can talk to the coach of the national team and say «hey I have to be there» ”¹⁰¹ (W07)

Lastly, it should be explained how it has been highlighted by the interviewees that in most of their cases, contrary to the higher media covered sport, the infrastructures and resources granted by the federations and Swiss Olympic to men and women are the same.

“For the conditions for trainings I have the feeling that it is the same. I mean, we have the same conditions for training and so on (...).”¹⁰² (M01)

“(...) in my sport I think there are not really great differences [between men and women]. (...) Because [the conditions for] training are the same. (...). It does not make differences if it is a man or a woman .”¹⁰³ (M06)

In this chapter it has been shown how the participants consider the degree of acceptance and flexibility they get for their dual career as strongly dependent on their sport federation and their coaches. It has further been advanced the perception of disinterest of the sports stakeholders in their academic career.

⁹⁹ Ich denke ihr Interesse liegt im Sport und nicht in anderen Punkten (...). Also sie verbieten nicht, dass wir studieren dürfen, aber ihr Interesse liegt mehr, dass wir im Sport gut sind, um den Verband weiterzubringen

¹⁰⁰ Bei uns wird (...) das ganze mit dem Studium, mit dem, direkt mit dem Trainer besprochen und es ist kein Thema im Verband. Und das wird ja, dann einzeln, also pro Athlet irgendwie angeschaut.

¹⁰¹ Du kannst schon mit dem Nationaltrainer sprechen und sagen «hei ich habe hier und muss da (sein) » (...).

¹⁰² Fürs Trainingsbedingungen habe ich das Gefühle das, dass das ausgeglichen ist. Also, wir haben allen die gleichen Bedingungen für Trainings und so weiter

¹⁰³ In meinen Sport denke ich gibt es nicht wirklich großen unterschieden. (...) Weil die Trainings(bedingungen) sind das gleiche, (...) Es spielt nicht eigentlich eine große Rolle ob es eine frau oder ein Mann ist (...).

5.3 THE FINANCIAL (UN)SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LIFE AS PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE IN SWITZERLAND: AN EVALUATION

As shown in the previous chapter, participants explain how professional sport is, in Switzerland, financially unsustainable as a "lifetime-job", leading them to have to combine it with a second career in order to be able to grant themselves a future. However, it is important to note that they recognize the possibility to live solely on professional sport in Switzerland only in a limited number of sports. This leads to cases of not having to combine the sports career with a second one to be able to make a living out of it. As examples, they gave soccer, ice hockey and skiing. Both athletes practising these sports, as well as athletes practising other sports have highlighted this point.

"The only way you could do only sport is by being either a soccer player or a hockey player (...)." ¹⁰⁴ (M02)

"(...) in soccer (...) do not really have to study." ¹⁰⁵ (W01)

In relation to the unsustainability of most of the professional sports as "life-time" jobs, the interviewees explain that, contrary to other nations; in Switzerland as professional athletes they do not get a salary neither from the federations nor the Confederation. In this regard they call for improvements.

"(...) my friend from Sweden (...) he gets paid by the sport federation, every month (...). Here we can only dream about the federation giving us money." ¹⁰⁶ (M02)

"[In Switzerland we need] more means. Meaning that the athletes would receive a salary (...) either from the sport federation (...) or from the Confederation (...)." ¹⁰⁷ (W06)

They further suggest that these differences might be related to the mentalities of the different countries. Where in other nations sport has a higher importance than in Switzerland, where they argue sport is not the priority.

¹⁰⁴ Uno non può neanche fare solo sport, almeno che non faccia il calciatore professionista o il giocatore di hockey (...).

¹⁰⁵ (...) dans le foot, , (...) les personnes doivent moins aller dans des voies des études.

¹⁰⁶ (...) ho questo amico svedese, (...) è pagato dalla federazione, mensile, (...). Qui noi ce lo sogniamo che la federazione e ci da dei soldi (...).

¹⁰⁷ [En Suisse il y faudrait] plus de moyens. Ça veut dire que les athlètes reçoivent des salaires (...) soit des fédérations (...) ou oui, alors c'est la Confédération qui devrait donner des salaires aux athlètes.

“(…) for example, in Sweden and Norway, there sport has higher importance than in Switzerland.”¹⁰⁸ (W04)

“In the Swiss mentality sport is not the first place.”¹⁰⁹ (W02)

“Switzerland is not a nation which is shaped around sport.”¹¹⁰ (M03)

In this direction, they then advance the idea that this would be the cause of fewer investments in sport by the Swiss institutions. And where the institution would be more focused on the short term strategies rather than the long-term ones.

“(…) It’s also the mentality that causes the fact that there is not enough money to support it (…).”¹¹¹ (W01)

“(…) if you make a comparison with other countries, (….) in Switzerland they invest less money. (….) it is a matter of money and importance/value (…).”¹¹² (M05)

“(…) I think that sometimes the Confederation thinks more short term, rather than long-term.”¹¹³ (W05)

They further suggest that for the Swiss society, education has the priority over sport, and that knowledge and performance are both central to it.

“I think that (…), we are still too much, too much tied to a standard of education, (….) I would say, old (fashioned)???. Yes, where you have to study first and then you can do what you want.”¹¹⁴ (M04)

“In Switzerland (….) we have thought this way for centuries, that knowledge, that education is really important.”¹¹⁵ (M03)

¹⁰⁸ (...) zum Beispiel in Schweden oder Norwegen, dort hat Sport ein total anderes Stellenwert als hier in der Schweiz.

¹⁰⁹ Nella mentalità svizzera, lo sport non è al primo posto.

¹¹⁰ Die Schweiz hat sich nicht als Sport-Nation profiliert.

¹¹¹ (...) c’est aussi la mentalité qui fait, que les institutions n’ont pas assez d’argent pour soutenir ça.

¹¹² (...) wenn man den Vergleich mit was im Ausland ist macht, (...) wird sicher in der Schweiz weniger Geld investiert. (...) es ist eine Frage von Geld und Wichtigkeit.

¹¹³ (...) ich habe das Gefühl, manchmal das Bund kurzfristig ist und sich nicht wirklich alles anschaut im länger sichtig.

¹¹⁴ Penso che (...), siamo ancora troppo, troppo legati a uno standard di formazione, oserei dire antico. Sì, nel quale prima studi e poi fai quello che ti piace.

¹¹⁵ In der Schweiz (...) Das ist seit mehreren Jahrhunderten so entwickelt dass „knowledge“, das Wissen, die ganzen Bildung ganz wichtig ist.

“(...) we live in a society, a achievement-oriented society (...).”¹¹⁶ (M05)

Following this idea, they recognize the fact that for the Swiss population it is considered as normal to have to combine the professional sport career with a second career.

“(...) half of the people ask me «and what do you do other than sport?» (...)”¹¹⁷ (W01)

“(...) in Switzerland there is already the idea that sport should be combined with a degree (...).”¹¹⁸ (M01)

“(...) people often ask me « what do you do apart from sport?»”¹¹⁹ (M05)

Even if the participants critically discuss the lack of official/federal salaries, they recognize the importance of funding they receive by both the cantons and the Confederation for their professional sports career.

“(...) the sport office of my canton supports me with 3'000 Francs a year.”¹²⁰ (M01).

“(...) from the Canton and Confederation is assured an enormous support, mostly thanks to the financial support (...).”¹²¹ (W03)

To face the financial pressure, which they argue comes with professional sport in Switzerland, the participants define the association “Schweizer Sporthilfe” as central, because it grants funding to a number of talented Swiss athletes. Since it is difficult to live solely based on sport, participants define its funding as often essential in order to pursue their professional sport career.

“Schweizer Sporthilfe it's really helpful for the financing (of our career).”¹²² (W06)

“For me personally [Schweizer Sporthilfe] is also the most important (support), because without this financial support, I could not be doing sport.”¹²³ (M08)

¹¹⁶ (...) wir leben in eine Leistungsgesellschaft (...).

¹¹⁷ (...) la moitié des gens demande « et qu'est-ce que tu fais à coté? ».

¹¹⁸ (...) in der Schweiz ist schon der Gedanke auch, dass man neben der Sportart noch eine Ausbildung machen sollte (...).

¹¹⁹ (...) ich wurde auch oft gefragt, «was machst du sonst?».

¹²⁰ (...) das Sportamt meines Kantons unterstützt mich (...) mit 3'000 Franken pro Jahr.

¹²¹ (...) beim Bund und Kanton ist schon eine riesen Unterstützung vorhanden, halt durch das Finanzielle (...).

¹²² (...) l'aide sportive. Pour le financement [de notre carrière]. Généralement ça aide vraiment beaucoup.

A participant highlights the fact that “Schweizer Sporthilfe” does not consider only the sporting results of the athletes to the assignment of the financial funding but it includes also other factors, for example the total costs, children, and so on.

“It considers the results, and it takes into consideration your costs, if you have a salary, if you still live with your parents, if you have kids, (...) or if you really need this financial support or not.”¹²⁴ (M04)

In relation to the financial support of Swiss Olympic, it has been critically discussed by a couple of participants how the category in which Swiss Olympic classifies a sport has both influence over the funding they get from Swiss Olympic itself and also influence on the research for sponsorships.

“(...) the problem is (...) that the second class receives less funding and it is then harder to find sponsors (...).”¹²⁵ (M01)

“There is funding from Swiss Olympic, but my sport has not really a high status by Swiss Olympic.”¹²⁶ (M03)

Furthermore, the participants have critically highlighted the fact that it is perceived to be present a lack of support for athletes who have still to get a Swiss Olympic Card.

“(...) once you have success, you are supported (...) you have to be in the national team, I think (...) if you are not, (...) it is hard.” (W08)¹²⁷

“(...) if you have a certain level, that you can be in a certain team, (...) I think that the institutional support is really good. But as far as you get out of this environment (...) of Swiss Olympic Cards, there you are little left out.”¹²⁸ (M04)

¹²³ (...) für mich persönlich [Schweizer Sporthilfe] ist fast das wichtigste [Unterstützung], weil ohne diese finanzielle Unterstützung, könnte ich kein Sport machen.

¹²⁴ Ha i criteri dei risultati, e poi in base ai tuoi costi che hai, se hai un salario, se vivi ancora a casa, se hai figli, o (...) in base se hai davvero bisogno di questi soldi di questo sostegno o no.

¹²⁵ (...) das Problem ist (...) die zweite Klasse, (...) bekommt (...) weniger Förderungsgelder und es ist auch schwieriger Sponsoren zu finden (...).

¹²⁶ Es gibt die Swiss Olympic Beiträge, aber mein Sport hat nicht so eine große Stellenwerte bei Swiss Olympic.

¹²⁷ (...) wenn man Erfolg hat, wird man mehr unterstützt. (...). Man muss in der Nationalmannschaft sein glaube ich. Sonst, ehm, (...) sonst wird schwierig.

¹²⁸ (...) se hai un certo livello, che puoi essere in certi quadri, (...). Il supporto delle istituzioni penso che sia ottimo direi. Ehm, però se appena esci da una cerchia, per dire delle tessere (...) di Swiss Olympic poi dopo li sei un po' abbandonato un po' a te stesso.

As regards the financial unsustainability, participants highlight also the dependency on sponsors to be able to finance their sports career, which they have to search for themselves.

“(…) we get money from sponsors and prizes. (…) Even if we are on the road, we have often searched for sponsors at night. To make sure that next season we would have enough money.”¹²⁹ (M05)

“It is hard to make a living [out of sport]. (…) It really depends on the athlete, who searches for sponsors.”¹³⁰ (W06)

Furthermore, they recognize the fact that sponsors must gain out of a sponsorship and how the sport practised has an influence over. both the need to get sponsorship and the difficulty or lack of it to find sponsors. more in detail, they explain how it is harder to find sponsors for marginal sports compared to sports such as soccer, ice-hockey, skiing and tennis, which they argue have a higher media coverage.

“On the one hand, we as athletes we need money. On the other hand, for the sponsors the question is what they gain out of it.”¹³¹ (M05).

“It depends on the sport you do. If you play soccer, for example, it’s clear that you are paid and that is enough [you do not need sponsors].”¹³² (W01)

“For marginal sport it is not easy to make money. The only way is to have funding or private sponsors, but it is not always so easy, when you don’t have great media coverage.”¹³³ (M06)

“The focus of the media is really restricted, let’s say 95% on soccer, skiing, ice-hockey and tennis. These are the top four, and all the others have what remains.”¹³⁴ (M08)

¹²⁹ (...) wir bekommen Geld von Sponsoren und Preisgeld. (...) Auch wenn wir unterwegs sind haben wir auch oft einen Sponsor am Abend gesucht. Zum wissen dass wir nächste Saison nicht auf Geld kämpfen müssen.

¹³⁰ (...) c’est difficile d’en vivre [du sport]. (...) ça dépend vraiment de l’athlète qui va chercher des sponsors.

¹³¹ (...) von der Seite der Sportler ist es immer das gleiche, wir brauchen Geld. Und Seite Sponsoren ist die Frage, was verdienen sie.

¹³² Ça dépend dans quel sport t’es. Après dans le foot, par exemple, bhan, c’est clair que quand t’est payé c’est bon-

¹³³ (...) (bei) einer relativen Randssportart, (...) kann man nicht wirklich Geld damit verdienen. Die einzige Möglichkeit ist zu-, sind Fördergeld oder privaten Sponsoren vielleicht, wenn man es findet, aber es ist immer auch nicht so einfach. Wenn man nicht so viel Medien-Aufmerksamkeit hat.

¹³⁴ (...) der mediale Focus, ehm, sehr begrenzt ist auf, sagen wir 95% halt Fußball, Eishockey, Ski, Tennis, dass denke ich sind die größten vier und haben allen anderen nebenbei noch ein bisschen.

Moreover, both women and men identify that it is sometimes easier to obtain sponsorship deals for women in their sport. They suppose that this might be related to the role that social media has nowadays in society. It is important to note, how in this case reference was made to sports which are not highly mediatized.

“(...) I have the impression that for women it is easier to find sponsors (...).”¹³⁵ (M05)

“(...) nowadays the sponsors wager a lot on women and the image in Instagram and so on.”¹³⁶ (W02)

In greater detail, women suggest the possibility that this could be both related to the frequency with whom they post on social media and the way women present themselves on it.

“(...) when you look at the athletes’ (social media) profiles, you see more often girls, who posts pictures about their private lives, (...) about shootings (...) I think this has an influence over the way you can get money.”¹³⁷ (W01)

“(as a woman), sponsors would come to you because (...) you are interesting for the marketing, and consequently, I would say, they will give you the sponsorship, (...) I would say that for girls it is easier to get sponsors in Switzerland (...) mostly because we post pictures, selfies (...).”¹³⁸ (W02)

Furthermore, it has been suggested by a couple of participants how the sporting attire might influence in some cases the chances to find sponsors. They also explain how in this case women could be potentially advantaged due to their physical attributes.

“(...) a bikini is really attractive, people look often women from behind and that is a super chance for ads (...) this has the potential, when an athlete has a great body, you can market yourself really well.”¹³⁹ (M05)

¹³⁵ (...) ich habe das Gefühl, das es für Frauen einfacher ist Sponsoren zu finden (...).

¹³⁶ (...) adesso con gli sponsor si punta tantissimo sulle donne a livello d'immagine Instagram e così.

¹³⁷ (...) quand tu vois les profils des athlètes, tu vois plus souvent une fille, qui poste une photo de, son privé, (...) une situation où elle à fait un shooting (...) je pense, ça a une influence sur comment tu t'arrives à te positionner pour faire de l'argent.

¹³⁸ (essendo donna) gli sponsor verranno da te perché (...) sei, a livello di marketing sei interessante e quindi ti metteranno, ti daranno lo sponsoring (...), e mi sembra che da noi in Svizzera sia più facile per le ragazze (...) soprattutto grazie ad Instagram perché noi metteremo foto, selfie (...).

¹³⁹ (...) den Bikini (...) ist sehr, anschaulich und man schaut gerne Frauen nach hinten und das ist eine super Werbe-Fläche (...) das hat auch das Potenzial, wenn man eine gute Körperform hat, kann man sich viel besser vermarkten.

Some participants suggest that the synchronisation of the competitions of some of their sports lures the same amount of attention for both for women and men competitors.

“Men and women are almost the same in this sport, you also have the same competitions.” ¹⁴⁰ (M07)

“(…) in this sport you always have (…) the competition of the women in the morning and the competition of the men in the afternoon.” ¹⁴¹ (M04)

Furthermore, in these cases the interviewees explain how in their sports the equality between men and women is also in the prize money.

“(…) prize money of the competitions is exactly the same.” ¹⁴² (M04)

“(…) prize money is for both, I mean for men and women the same.” ¹⁴³ (W04)

However, to this should be added that in both the case of team sports with high media coverage and in sports with a lower media attention, a difference has been highlighted among the size of the salaries which the professional athletes receive. It has been explained by the participants how men’s salaries in a team are usually larger in relation to women’s.

“(…) soccer is for sure more challenging for women, they would have to do something more [to be able to live]. (…) Whereas for the men, they have had a lot more financial support already since a really young age.” ¹⁴⁴ (M06)

“(…) in my [team]sport there are less women’s teams and women are lower paid.” ¹⁴⁵ (M04)

In this chapter, it has been shown how, for most Swiss athletes, concentrating solely on a sports career would be financially unsustainable. In order to be professional athletes in their sport they consequently need to depend on some other financial measures such as cantonal and national funding, Swiss Olympic funding, Schweizer Sporthilfe funding and sponsors. The chances to obtain this funding have been (mostly) critically analysed and it has been discussed how it would seem that in the less covered media sports, the resources and

¹⁴⁰ Frauen und Männer sind fast gleich in unserem Sport. (...) du hast auch die gleichen Wettkämpfe

¹⁴¹ (...) da noi c'è sempre (...) la gara donne la mattina e poi la gara degli uomini il pomeriggio.

¹⁴² (...) i premi delle gare, sono esattamente identici.

¹⁴³ das Preisgeld ist bei beiden, also bei Männern und Frauen gleich.

(...) Fußball es ist für Frau sicher schwieriger beziehungsweise ist abhängig von etwas anderes zu machen nebenbei. (...) Währenddessen bei Männern schon seit sehr früheren Jahren, sehr viel Förderung stattfindet.

¹⁴⁵ (...) nel mio [team] sport ci sono meno squadre per donne e sono meno pagate.

funding granted to men and women would be equal. In the case of sponsorship, the idea has been advanced that women could sometimes have a small advantage over men, thanks to their use of social media and to their physical attractiveness. On the other hand, in the case of team sports with salaries it would seem that the men would be advantaged over women. Moreover, the idea has been advanced that the similarity of competitions for men and women would mean the same media attention for both men's and women's sport. and would grant them also the same prize money.

5.4 LIFE AS A PROFESSIONAL SPORT-STUDENT IN SWITZERLAND: THE EVERYDAY LIFE AND FUTURE PLANS

In this research the challenges faced by the athlete-students are also analysed. Consequently something needs to be clarified about their everyday lives and futures.

5.4.1 DAILY PLANNING

As hinted in the previous chapters, combining the academic career and the professional sports career can be challenging for the athlete-students as it involves intense planning, time management. The professional athletes-students recognize this as a big challenge for them. They further explain that at the beginning of the semesters they have to intensively plan their next months to make sure to be able to combine studies and sport.

“I think that the bigger challenge is (...) to plan everything out in advance.”¹⁴⁶ (W01)

“The bigger challenge is the planning. For example, at the beginning of the semester I have to reflect «where is the compulsory presence, when is the exam» and then check if it possible to do it with the plan of the tournaments (...).”¹⁴⁷ (M06)

“(...) I have to train, I have to study. And I have to find the right balance between the two. That's always challenging.”¹⁴⁸ (W06)

As it regards the planning of their studies, the participants recognize as challenging for them group-works and the time needed to catch up on the classes they missed

“For me the bigger challenge in studies is always to be up to date with the others, always to know what they did and catch up.”¹⁴⁹ (W05)

¹⁴⁶ Je pense que une des plus grandes *Herausforderungen* c'est (...) de planifier tous à l'avance

¹⁴⁷ die Planung, (ist die größere Herausforderung), also zum Beispiel, beim Semesterbegin immer überbelegen muss, muss man wirklich schauen “(...) wo gibt es Anwesenheit-Pflicht, wann ist die Prüfung“ und dann mit der Kalender gleich mit den turnieren dann, ist es überhaupt möglich

¹⁴⁸ (...) je dois m'entraîner mais je dois aussi réviser. Et trouver le juste équilibre. Ça c'est toujours dure.

“(…) with the group-works you have to make sure to have enough time to meet up with the others.”¹⁵⁰ (W03)

In this direction, the class material given to them has been critically evaluated and they explain how e-learning and podcasts would grant them to study everywhere and would save them time. In this regard, as previously introduced, in some cases it has been explained that the material they get online seem to depend on the professor. As it regards podcasts, none of the participants have said that they have it; rather it has been suggested multiple times as a possible improvement of the system.

“It would be much easier for me if for example the classes would be filmed, if it would be a podcast or something that I can listen to, to at least listen to the explications of the professors. This for example, I think it would be really helpful for everyone.”¹⁵¹ (W01)

“(…) podcast. I think they would be the best thing in the world (…).”¹⁵² (W02)

Furthermore, some participants explain how combining the sports career and academic career has an influence over multiple aspects of their sporting life, as they need to, for example, have time for recovery and physical therapy. They recognize that recovery is the most challenging part of their sport because they consider it a crucial part that unfortunately cannot always be done as well as they wish.

“(…) it’s not like a puzzle with three pieces, it has fifty pieces and everyone depends on the other one. If tomorrow I do not go the physiotherapist (…), I’m not going to be better if I do not go to the physiotherapist.”¹⁵³ (W01)

“(…) the biggest challenge (in sport) is to find enough time for the recovery.”¹⁵⁴ (M06)

¹⁴⁹ Für mich die Herausforderung im Studium ist einfach (...) immer wieder auf dem Niveau zu sein und zu wissen was die anderen gemacht haben und wieder nachzuarbeiten.

¹⁵⁰ (...) mit Gruppenarbeiten muss du auch schauen, dass du genügend Zeit hast, dich mit ihnen zu treffen

¹⁵¹ Ce qui serait assez plus facile pour moi, ce serait si par exemple le cours était filmé et il y a un podcast ou un truc que je peux écouter, pour au moins écouter les explications des profs. Ça par exemple, je pense que ça serait (...) oui, très bien (...) pour tout le monde

¹⁵² (...) i podcast. Secondo me sarebbero la miglior cosa che potrebbe succedere nel mondo (...)

¹⁵³ (...) ce n’est pas un puzzle qui n’a que trois pièces, il y a cinquante pièces, et tout dépend de l’autre. Si demain je ne fais pas de physio, ehm, je dois m’entraîner, ehm cinq fois, dix fois par semaine, je ne vais pas être mieux si je n’ai pas de physio.

¹⁵⁴ (...) die größere Herausforderung, noch genug Zeit für die Regeneration zu finden.

“(...) sometimes there is then no time left for the recovery.”¹⁵⁵ (M01)

As it regards their everyday life, they highlight how their dual career has an influence over their social life, spontaneous activities and free time. These have been identified as also the first activities which they renounce, in the case where they found themselves short of time.

“(...) it has an influence over your social life. Friends, boyfriend, it's complicated.”¹⁵⁶ (W06)

“You have little time for friends and spontaneous activities.”¹⁵⁷ (M03)

“When you have so much burden/work from school and training, then you find yourself short of time, so for example social life, to meet up with friends or something like that. When I do not have any time left, that is the thing which I cancel, that is always the first thing I cancel.”¹⁵⁸ (M07)

Furthermore, they explain how it impacts their relationship with daily tasks such as shopping, cooking, washing and so on. As they perceive it as a “waste of time” in the sense that it is unproductive time for both their careers.

“[the university] is not far from home. Meaning that I don't have to think about home stuff. I don't have to waste time for shopping, cooking and all of those things.”¹⁵⁹ (M04)

“(...) if I have to go shopping, I have (once again) wasted time.”¹⁶⁰ (W08)

This short chapter has shown how in involving their dual career all aspects of life. Their dual career consequently challenges them in multiple ways and sometimes some choices have to be made and some activities must be prioritized over others.

¹⁵⁵ (...) die Regeneration-Zeiten zum Teil zu kurz kommen.

¹⁵⁶ (...) ça va influer jors la vie sociale. Les amis, le copain c'est un peu compliqué.

¹⁵⁷ Zu wenig Zeit für Freunde, zu wenig Zeit für spontane Aktivitäten.

¹⁵⁸ Wenn du halt so viel Belastung hast, von Schule und Training, dann kommt das ganze zu kurz, so zum Beispiel soziales Leben, Treffen mit Freunden oder so, das ist halt so immer, wenn ich keine Zeit mehr habe, streiche ich immer das weg. Das ist das erste das ich wegstreiche.

¹⁵⁹ [L'università] è vicino a casa, e quindi tutto quello che è organizzazione, di casa, non c'è. Quindi tutta la perdita di tempo di andare a fare la spesa, cucinare e tutte queste cose non le ho.

¹⁶⁰ (...) wenn ich einkaufen gehen muss, habe ich wieder Zeit verloren.

5.4.2 FUTURE PLANS

It was previously explained how the participants see their sport career as limited in time . During the interviews they also highlight how future plans could vary among men and women, where women, while planning their academic and sporting career and their future working one, seem to have to take into consideration also when to (eventually) have children and a family.

“(...) right now, I want to study and once I am done I would work, make money and just then would be, for me, time for a family.” ¹⁶¹ (W05)

“You do sport, you want to have a degree, because then you mostly would want to have a family.” ¹⁶² (W03)

Moreover, they highlight that for women it would be challenging to become mothers while still being a athlete-student because pregnancy implies a forced stop, from which the body might not completely recover.

“(...) as a woman (...) you have to plan (...) if you would want to come back after having a child, and it is not guaranteed that you can come back, it is not guaranteed that your body recovers. (...) Yes, there are women, who have retired because they had a baby and this lead them to retire.” ¹⁶³ (W04).

“(...) for women it is a forced stop. It can change a lot.” ¹⁶⁴ (W05)

For women it has in fact been explained how the timing of a pregnancy might be critical in having a “biological clock”.

“For a woman it is completely different to a man. You have to think about when you want to have children, if you want to have children. And that is because you have a biological clock.” ¹⁶⁵ (W01)

¹⁶¹ (...) ich weiss ich möchte jetzt fertig studieren und dann es ist für mich ganz klar, ehm, arbeiten, Geld zu haben, und dann ist es für mich Familie gründen

¹⁶² (...) du betriebs Sport, möchtest du auch eine Ausbildung machen, weil du wahrscheinlich eine Familie kriegen willst.

¹⁶³ (...) als Frau. (...) Du muss das ganze irgendwie (...) planen, (...) ob du dann irgendwie, wenn du ein Kind hast, dann überhaupt zurückkommen, ob dein Körper überhaupt mitmacht auch, nicht garantiert. (...) Ja. Es kamen mehrere, die ein Kind bekommen haben und auch wegen dem aufgehört haben.

¹⁶⁴ (...) für Frauen es ist wie ein Unterbruch. (...) Das kann sehr viel ändern.

¹⁶⁵ En tant que femme c'est clair que c'est autre chose qu'un homme. Tu dois certainement penser plus à quand tu vas avoir des enfants, si tu veux avoir des enfants. Ehm, parce que bhan, t'as une horloge naturelle, biologique.

“A woman has a completely different career because she has to bear children.”¹⁶⁶
(M03)

With regards to men, none has made reference to their biological clock, and both female and male athlete-students explain that for men having children during the dual career would not be a real problem because they are not the ones who bear the children and who usually take care of them. However, they recognize the fact that, even if the man does not need to take a break from sport during the pregnancy he needs to be comfortable leaving the family behind while continuing to play professionally.

“As a man, you do not think about it. It is not your problem. (...) It does not have an influence over your performance.”¹⁶⁷ (M04)

“(...) The wife had a baby and they were always training and competing with us.”¹⁶⁸
(W04)

In this case differences in the planning among women and men during and after the career have been explained, where for women the pregnancy and the children seem to potentially be a supplementary factor to take into consideration, as it impacts directly on their body and their ability to practise sport.

¹⁶⁶ Eine Frau hat einfach eine andere Karriere, weil sie Kinder gebären muss.

¹⁶⁷ Se sei uomo, non ci pensi. Non è un tuo problema. (...) Non è che influenza, non dovrebbe influenzare la tua performance sportiva.

¹⁶⁸ Die Frau hat ein Kind gekriegt aber sie waren immer noch dabei.

6 COMBINING PROFESSIONAL SPORT AND TERTIARY STUDIES IN SWITZERLAND: A DISCUSSION

After presenting the results of the interviews conducted with my sample of Swiss professional athlete–students, in this chapter the focus is on the compatibility of a professional sports career with an academic career. A critical analysis of the Swiss education system and Swiss sports system is presented, with the ultimate goal of presenting the arguments, which would determine the answer to the research questions of this paper. At first the support granted to the Swiss professional athlete-students is discussed. Afterwards the financial unsustainability of a solely professional sport career is critically presented.

6.1 THE SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE-STUDENTS IN SWITZERLAND: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The combination and the compatibility between professional sport and tertiary studies in Switzerland implies multiple stakeholders. As the results show, in Switzerland there seems to be a great number of differences present in the treatment and the flexibility granted to the professional athletes-students at the Swiss tertiary institutes. I propose that the support granted to them is institute-prone, person-prone, result-prone and sport-prone. Interviewees have advanced these arguments, while explaining that, with the current state of the system, every case seems to be handled individually at multiple (and different) levels of their tertiary institute and their federation and/or team. They explain how this leads to differences in treatment and adjustments conceded to them.

6.1.1 THE PERSON-PRONE AND THE INSTITUTE-PRONE NATURE OF SUPPORT FOR ATHLETE-STUDENTS

Analysing the results of the interview it could be possible to identify a set of adjustments and services, which seem to be granted, in different measures, to the professional athletes at a Swiss tertiary institute. The set of adjustments and services granted to the athletes-students could be identified as:

- Prolongation of the number of semesters to conclude their studies
- Flexibility with the exams dates
- Flexibility with compulsory presence
- Counseling service with coordinator for professional sports people and studies at the institute

I suggest a lack of standardization as it relates to this set of adjustments and services. In fact, thanks to the analysis of the results this could be identified as:

- **Unstandardized prolongation of the number of semesters:** where the number of the extra semesters granted varies
- **Unstandardized nature of the postponed exams:** where the possibility to postpone an exam seems to be granted, but the nature of the postponed exams seem to vary
- **Unstandardized compulsory presence:** where in some cases it appears that no exceptions would be made for professional athletes, and in other cases a certain degree of flexibility would be granted
- **Unstandardized guidance during the studies:** where a coordinator for the athlete-student is not present in all cases at a Swiss university.

I would suggest that the support and the flexibility granted to them at a university is strongly unequal and dependent on the institute in which they study. In greater detail, it would seem to depend both on the services that these institutes grants to the professional athletes-students and on people in charge of decisions related to their dual career at an institute. As it relates to the services, I would suggest that in the institutes (in which a coordinator for them is present) the flexibility granted to them and the understanding of their dual career is higher than in the institutes where this service is not offered. In these cases the compatibility between sport and studies seems to be advantaged. This would show the creation of inequalities in treatment of athletes. The SUSF (Swiss University Sport Federation) has already provided a contact person for professional athletes in the majority of the institutes in order to grant support for them (SUSF, 2018) , However, in order to limit inequalities of treatment among top-performance athletes-students, I would suggest the necessity to create a counseling service with a coordinator in every Swiss tertiary institute, in which career counselling, advisement, tutorial assistance might be granted. Important to clarify is that I have the knowledge that creating this service might imply a great number of costs and resources which could present a set of challenges for the institutes themselves. Nonetheless, I believe that the presence of a counseling service might be a potential facilitator in in managing cases, where of students require special adjustments. This type of services could be granted also to the other students who have to combine their career with a second one, for example in the case of artists, or again in the case of single mothers, and so on.

I would further agree with them in identifying personal interest in sport and the understanding of a dual career as central in the decision of the adjustments granted to the athlete-student. To this I would add the fact that multiple people seem to be in charge at an institute for decision making related to their dual career. In greater detail, I would identify the Dean's office and the Professors as decision-makers. On one hand, the Dean's Office has been identified by the participants as in charge of the prolongation of the studies, the flexibility of

the exams, and in some cases of the compulsory presence too. On the other hand, professors have been identified in most of the cases as overseeing the flexibility of the compulsory presence for professional athlete-students. Consequently, as it seems that in this cases where multiple decision-makers are employed, I would assume a really strong influence of the individual's understanding and personal interest to allow professional athlete-students to best combine their dual careers. I would consequently argue that the support at a Swiss university could be considered as both institute-prone and person-prone.

Furthermore, I would then interpret the "non-standardization" of the compatibility between sport career and academic career as both the consequence of the person-prone nature of the decisions takers and the consequent lack of a official/national regulation or guideline, which would potentially create standards for the decisions related to the dual careers of athlete-students. In this sense more clarity and standardization could have the potential to facilitate the compatibility between professional sport and studies. anyhow, I would anticipate the agreement signed by Swiss Olympic and the Swiss University as a first step in the desire to facilitate the compatibility between two careers. The creation of a national regulation might be a suggestion for the improvement of the current system. However, I believe that in having many different federations and institutes involved, the creation of federal regulation might become problematic and not as easy as one might believe. The needs of the single sports could be different or not aligned. Consequently the efficiency of the regulation might resent from the necessary/mandatory generalization of rules that it would require. The creation of a national guideline instead of a national regulation might be an interesting alternative. I would suggest the creation of a guideline in which the most critical point are defined, discussed and indications about standard way to take action would have the potential to grant a better compatibility between studies and sport.

In it, it could be present, for example a standardization of the number of extra semester granted to the professional athletes among the Swiss tertiary system, so that it would be possible to limit inequalities in the flexibility and in the treatment granted to the athlete-students. However, I recognize the difficulties, which could be faced in the determination of it, as different programs or institutes have different needs and requirements for their students. Such as, in the case of internships, laboratories, and so on, the implication could differ from a study in which none of these would be required.

I would consider compulsory presence as one of the main challenges that the participants have to face while combining their two careers. I would define this as a particularly delicate point, as for practical classes or courses, the necessity of a compulsory presence is unequivocal. Also in this case the participants have identified inequalities and I would

consequently suggest the inclusion of a standardization of it in the guideline too. I would not suggest the full dispensation for professional athletes for classes and course, which require compulsory participation, but providing more flexibility in these cases could perhaps be arranged, which would certainly make it easier to combine both careers. The same reasoning could be done in the case of internships and stages, where maybe arrangements could be granted.

Another point, which could be included, is the degree in which it is possible to postpone the exams as un-clarity and inequalities in nature of the postponed session has been identified by the participants. I would suggest that by making clear for example the nature of the exam to take in the repetition-session of August-September, some improvements in the support of the dual career of athlete-students could be achieved. However, it needs to be recognized, how the efficiency of this adjustment for the single athlete could be related to the sport they practise. In fact, different periods and location of training and/or competitions could be involved in their planning and it could result in difficulty arranging special individual conditions/arrangements. Consequently, it is important to note, that all the participants in this case study practise sport that have the off-season between September and November. This means that they potentially would have time to take the exam during this extra-session. For an athlete who practises winter sports, this session would not be so suitable because it would take place during their pre-season, where they would be training constantly to prepare the next season. For them the next exam session (December- January) is also problematic because it would be during their competition-season. Unfortunately, in this case study there are no winter sports athletes, so no further observations could be made. It could be argued also that one of the reasons behind the lack of winter sport-participants could be the period in which the interviews were held. The interviews were held between October and December, which means that the athletes were either already in the middle of their season or their preparation for the new season. Lastly, in relation to the exams, the participants criticize the fact that the possibility to postpone the exam until the next session is a condition granted to every student. I would consequently not consider this as a special adjustment granted to them because it is a condition, which supposedly is available to every student at a Swiss university. In this sense I would argue that this could actually not be a "special" concession that is given to athlete-student, but a rule in the Swiss system.

The person-prone nature of support could also be identified in the Swiss sports system. In fact, the athlete-students explain how they perceive differences in the acceptance and understanding of their career in the sport system, namely by federations and (national and/or team) coaches. This is also already the case in the education system. At sports level it was possible to identify an unstandardized factor; namely the flexibility in training sessions

granted to the athlete-students by the coaches. I would identify this as strongly related to the acceptance that coaches have of athletes' dual careers. In fact, even if federations and coaches seem to accept the dual careers of their athletes, I would argue that this acceptance would be only partial, as it seems that their priority would still be the success of the athletes in their sports. Furthermore, I would suggest a greater consideration of the academic career by the federations and coaches in the planning of trainings, training camps, etc. However, I recognize the difficulties, which would come with this, as depending on the sport and the program attended by the student, it could be harder to always best arrange it. It would be even more difficult to achieve this in the case of multiple athletes conducting dual careers and attending different tertiary institutes or programs. Finding the best solution could be particularly energy-demanding and potentially some of them would not be completely satisfied with the final arrangements. Ultimately compromises would have to be made.

Important to note is how the institute-prone and the person-prone nature of the support granted to the athlete-students, and the unstandardized flexibility which results from it, seem to cause differences in the compatibility between two careers for the athlete-students but not inequalities among gender. It might be easier/harder for some than others to combine their two careers, but this seems not to be related to the gender of the athlete-student. On the one hand, I would interpret this point as a consequence of the importance of education in Switzerland. In more detail, I would suppose that for tertiary the priority is the excellence of its students and not their gender. In the same direction, I would suppose that it would not make difference for them the gender of the student, who asks for adjustments. On the other hand it could also be suggested that the final objective for the federations is to be nationally and internationally successful and it would make no difference for them if it were men or women, which grant them the possibility to achieve success. Consequently, they would not have reasons to treat unequally men and women.

6.1.2 THE RESULT-PRONE AND SPORT-PRONE NATURE OF THE SUPPORT

In a couple of cases, the participants explain the fact that to obtain a Swiss Olympic Card athletes must already have shown national or international success. I would suggest that, for high media attention sports or sport with a high degree of participation, it could be harder to obtain a Swiss Olympic Card than for less media covered ones or sport with a lower degree of participations. Additionally, I argue that, even if not intended, the attainment of the Cards might indirectly create differences in the chances to combine the two careers. In fact, there could be up and coming athletes, who are training with the objective to upgrade from recreational to professional sport., who would need some adjustments in order to become successful, but would be ineligible for the concession because they have not shown the

required results and consequently do not have a Swiss Olympic Card (Elite, Bronze, Silver or Gold). . If they are unable to receive adjustments from their institute, athletes may decide after college to abandon their sports career and concentrate solely on their studies, in order to grant themselves a future. Also, in this case I would identify the possibility of athletes having to decide between studies and sport, leading to a potential “loss” in Swiss sporting talent, and the possibilities of attaining higher (inter-)national sporting success. However, although it has been shown to restrain and limit the chances of a certain number of athletes pursuing a dual career, I recognize that it would make sense to consider results as the criteria to assign the set of concessions, to have a hold over the athletes who need adjustments and to create a distinction among leisure athletes and professional athletes. In order to limit the risk of losing athletic or academic potential and talent, I would suggest the inclusion of the Swiss Olympic National / Regional Talent Card ¹⁶⁹ among the Swiss Olympic Cards which allow access to the “special adjustment” at a Swiss university. However, it has to be recognized that these cards are reserved to the athletes competing at the junior level, meaning that as soon as the athletes are (normally) twenty – three years old and still on the run for success, they would not be able to have access to the concessions.

These assumptions and reasoning would potentially allow considering the support received by the athlete-students not only as person-prone, institute-prone but also result-prone and sport prone, where the sport practiced could also have an influence in the chances to obtain a Swiss Olympic Card and consequently to obtain adjustments, and where the Swiss Olympic Card (and their criteria for the assignment) might potentially lead to inequalities in the chances of obtaining both a Card and the set of concessions at a Swiss university.

6.2 FINANCIAL (UN) SUSTAINABILITY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

The second (main) argument advanced by the athlete-students could be considered the financial unsustainability of a solely professional sports career in Switzerland in most sports. They in fact, detect a difference between the chances to make a living out of popular sports such as soccer, ice hockey and skiing and the chances to make a living out of other, less popular sports in Switzerland, as for example the sport they practise. Two main reasons for these differences seem to be recognized by the interviewees themselves in the Swiss culture and mentality and the media attention given to sports.

¹⁶⁹ The Swiss Olympic Talent Card National / Regional is given to members of a national or regional junior executive based on the coach's assessment (Swiss Olympic, 2017)

6.2.1 THE SWISS MENTALITY AND CULTURE

In relation to the Swiss culture and mentality, they advance the idea that sport could not be considered as the priority of Switzerland. They define Switzerland as a “performance-directed” nation in which education and knowledge have the priority over sport. They suggest the idea that following the orientation of the Swiss system more in direction of the education, consequently institutions do not invest more in sport and as a consequence of this they identify a lack of salaries paid by both the Confederation and the national sport federations.

Additionally, as the participants have highlighted, I would again advance the idea that this is a consequence of the current Swiss system, in which professional sport would be a limited phase of the life of an individual rather than a “life-time” job. This might be reflected in an ideal society, in which, as shown by the interviewees, it is perceived as normal to combine professional sport and studies to be able to earn a living (after retirement from sport). I would suggest that the lack of a national/official regulation or more value in this direction could derive from this mentality.

6.2.2 THE HIGH MEDIA ATTENTION SPORTS VS LOWER MEDIA ATTENTION SPORTS

Another point, which the participants seem to define as one of the reasons of the prevalent financial unsustainability of a professional sport career in Switzerland, is the focused media-interest and coverage around a limited number of sports such as male soccer, ice hockey and skiing.

The interviewees explain the almost impossibility to make a living out of sport in Switzerland and they identify men’s ice hockey, men’s soccer and skiing as the only sports possible to live solely from. The FOSPO (Federal Office of Sport) itself recognizes the financial unsustainability of professional sport in Switzerland and identifies soccer and ice hockey exceptions to this rule, following an easier and greater commercialization of the sport (FOSPO, 2016c: 26). The explanation of this phenomenon by the participants goes in a similar direction. In fact, they suggest that these sports are the ones which are for the most covered by the media. Even if, as highlighted by the participants, in these sports men’s are paid higher salaries and have better infrastructure than women, creating inequality between genders, where men seem advantaged over women, I decided not to denominate these sports as male-dominated. The reason behind this is, in this case study the media attention received by a sport seem to have a greater influence over the support granted to the athlete-students than gender itself. Namely, I have decided to define men soccer, skiing and men ice-hockey as “high media attention sports” and the others I refer to as “lower media attention sports”. All the professional athletes-students who have taken part to this study would be athletes of lower media attention sports. They explain how in their cases the resources and

infrastructure granted to men and women by the federations and teams would be the same, leading them to think that in the case of these sports no inequalities among men and women are present. They also explain how in their cases it is not possible to make a living out of their sport for both men and women, which leads them to depend on others to be able to sponsor themselves in their professional careers. They indicate the implication and importance of multiple stakeholders to support them financially:

- Cantonal and federal funding
- Private sponsors
- Prize money
- Schweizer Sporthilfe

It could be recognized the fact that not every athlete seems to have access to cantonal and federal funding, however not enough has been said by the participants to be able to discuss this point in detail. For this reason I have decided not to discuss more this to avoid inaccuracies. Consequently, I decided to concentrate this analysis to the other funding, which have been predominantly discussed by the participants.

In relation to sponsorships, participants identify the limited attention towards a restricted number of sports as a negative influence over the securement of sponsors for athletes-students. They explain how potential sponsors seem to prefer to invest in the high media attention sports, which would potentially grant them more revenue. In regard to lower media attention sport, some of them have identified a small advantage for women in the gaining of sponsorship, They reasoned that this could be related to women in general posting more frequently on social media. the nature of their posts has also been hinted as a possible reason. in fact, participants explain how women more frequently post while off uniform moments such as private pictures, or photo-shoots. In addition to this, even their sporting attire in some sports has been hinted as a possible advantage to get sponsorships. I would interpret this differentiation among men and women as related to the perception of sport as representation of masculine traits and of the perception of the role of men and women in the society. This suggestion is aligned with what Mary J Kane affirmed in 2002, where she argued that women in the media are more likely to be portrait out of courts and off uniform and she further suggest that women to get sponsorships need to show a wholesome picture of their lives. Furthermore, it has been hinted that male athletes, who practise team sports in which athletes get a salary, would receive a higher salary compared to a women's team, or the women in the team. In this case, men seem to be slightly advantaged over women. I would interpret this again as due to the sometime of sport as representation of masculine traits and of the perception of the role of men and women in the society.

In relation to sponsors and funding, the participants explain how the categorization of sports of Swiss Olympic influences both the funding that the federations receive and their chances to find sponsors. I would agree that the categorization of Swiss Olympic would create inequalities in the financial support within lesser attention sports. For example, volleyball is classified as a category three sport by Swiss Olympic, meaning that the funding which they are granted is less than, for example, beach-volleyball, which is classified as category one, or orienteering which is classified as category two. Orienteering would in turn receive less funding than beach-volleyball, which has a higher ranking. It should also be noted that the categorization by Swiss Olympic creates a distinction not only among Olympic sports but also between the non-Olympic sports. This might disadvantage the latter category because the Swiss federation of these sports receives a smaller budget from Swiss Olympic. I would argue at this point that the fact that the categorization of the sports by Swiss Olympic is based not only on sport results, but includes criteria such as the international profile of a sport, the national profile, and the media and economic importance of a sport, even if not intended, might have the potential to reinforce the unsustainability of a life as professional athlete in a lower media attention sport and this might promote the Swiss sport system as a system in which high media attention sport would be slightly advantaged.

At this point it would be important to discuss an aspect which seems to limit inequalities between gender in lower attention sports would be the synchronisation of **competitions** for both men and women, which often take place in the same city and during the same period of time. In these cases **equality of prize money and an equal media attention seem to be present**. In this regard it could be supposed that, in the case of lower media attention sport, the degree of inequalities among gender would be limited, but following the presence of factors which seem to advantage women on the one side, and men on the other, it would be wrong to define these sports as completely inequality-free.

In conclusion, it could be argued that the financial (un)sustainability of professional sports in Switzerland could be related to differences identified between high media attention sports and lower media attention sports. Whereas it is possible to make a living out of high media attention sports, those competing in lower media attention sports must combine professional sport with a second career in order to earn a living. In terms of gender, it could be argued that in the case of lower media attention sport, there are fewer inequalities between genders. This could also be impacted by the synchronisation of competitions and of a more equal media attention. However also in the case of lower media attention sport in some cases inequalities between men and women can be detected. As for women seem to be easier to get sponsorships, to men seem to be granted higher salaries in the case of team-sport.

6.3 DAILY PLANNING AND FUTURE PLANS

While discussing the support granted to them and the financial unsustainability of lower media attention sports, a great number of challenges that the professional athletes-students must face, have been presented. The complication of short – term and long-term planning, which has been identified by the participants as particularly challenging, should be added to the challenges that participants perceive to face. They explain how having this dual career requires the planning of every aspect of life, some of which sometimes must be sacrificed, particularly social life and recovery times. Given that in Switzerland it is supposedly unsustainable to pursue professional sport as a life-time job, it is difficult to envision a way to include everything. However, I would argue that the implementation of the current system would have the potential to grant better compatibility between the two careers, which could possibly also reduce the number of instances where athlete-students must sacrifice time for social life or recovery.

Participants have also raised differences in the life courses of men and women. Both men and women should potentially be able to combine sport with study before moving on to employment. They also both have the potential to have families. For men it has been recognised by the participants that they are able to start a family while still in sport, study or employment. Women, however, find it much more difficult to return to sport after they have children. It is also interesting to note that neither the men nor women interviewed explicitly expressed the possibility for a woman to combine family and work. The athlete-students justified the differences in futures of men and women by explaining that women have a “biological clock”. None has considered the fact that also in the case of men the “biological clock” should be taken into consideration while planning a family. This is possibly due to the normalization of gender roles in the Swiss society, in which the ultimate role/goal of women is to raise a family, while the men would be the ones providing for the family.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In the last two chapters the results of this case study have been presented and critically discussed. I argued that living solely out of sport in Switzerland seem to be possible only in the case of a restrained number of sports, which I have named “high media attention sport”. These sports would be men’s soccer, men’s ice hockey, skiing. In the case of others sports, with lower media attention, a professional career in sport is not seen as their “life-time job”. It seems necessary for professional athletes to combine their sport career with a second career in order to be able to earn enough money to make a living in the future. I suggested classifying these sports as “lower media attention sport. Similarly, the results of Aquilina’s research (2013) about British athlete-students shows that a small amount of financial reward is received, which does not grant them the chance to make a living out of sport (Aquilina, 2013: 374). He further defined some of reasons, which lead athlete-students to conduct a dual career such as more certainty about the future and an easier transition into post-athletic career (Aquilina, 2013: 388-389). In my research the easier transition into post-athletic career has not been explicitly cited as a reason to choose a dual career but it could be considered as a reason to decide on academy over work to combine with the sport career.

As it relates to the financial (un-sustainability) of professional sport in Switzerland I would debate that both the sport categorization of sport between “high media attention sport” and “lower media attention” and the categorization of sports by Swiss Olympic, seem to influence the funding granted to both athletes and sport federations. It also affects the chances for professional athletes-students to find sponsors, which might have an influence in the chances they have in pursuing their sport career. Without the correct sum of money they would in fact, not be able to pursue their sport at a professional level. As it relates the lower media attention sport, no great differences between the genders have been detected due to the fact that in most of the cases no big media attention is granted to both men and women competition. It has been also suggested that the simultaneity of the men’s and women’s competitions is a facilitator in the maintenance of little difference among the two, as the fact that both competitions take place at the same period of time and mostly in the same place, gives the same media attention to both. In these cases also the same prize money is granted to the both genders. It is important to note how in the case of lower media attention it has been argued that for women it could be easier to have access to sponsorships due to their sporting attire and their way of

interacting with social media. On the other hand, it has been explained how men would get higher salaries in the case of teams sport.

I further suggest that the differentiation between “higher media sport” and “lower media attention sports” is due to the Swiss state system and the Swiss mentality and culture. In fact, it seems that Switzerland could be considered as a nation, which is not profiled as a sport-nation but more as a education/knowledge-oriented-nation, in which sport is important for the population practiced at a leisure level, but not is not considered as the priority of the state, which might result, for example, in the non-existence of salaries for professional athletes neither from the sport federations or the Confederation. I further suppose that the Swiss system, the mentality and the culture could be considered as a reason why, in Switzerland there is no official/federal regulation for the compatibility/combination between academic career and sport career. Following Aquilina and Henry’s (2010) suggestion, Switzerland could be considered as a nation in which the position adopted by tertiary institutes to face the needs of athlete-students attending their programs is a *laissez-faire* strategy: meaning that no formal structures are present (Aquilina & Henry, 2010: 31). However, in the Swiss case it has to be recognized the fact that the Confederation has a role of sponsor/facilitator as she funds professional sport. It also has to be recognized the recent signing of an agreement about dual career between Swiss Olympic and Swiss Universities. It is important to note that the professional sport is managed by Swiss Olympic and not by the Confederation itself.

Additionally, my research showed that the lack of a official/federal regulation, might be the reason why, in this case study, the services, the support and the flexibility granted to the interviewed Swiss professional athlete-students could be considered as institute prone, person-prone, sport-prone and result-prone. In terms of the institute – prone nature of the support and flexibility granted to the athletes, differences in the services and adjustments granted to professional athletes-students seem to depend on which Swiss tertiary institute they are attending. As a matter of fact, at the current state of the system, not in all universities is present a coordinator, who supports them closely during their studies. I have suggested the necessity to introduce a counseling service and a coordinator in every the tertiary institute in order to grant to the professional athletes the support needed. This type of services could further be granted also to the other students who have to combine their career with a second

one, such as in the case of artists, or again in the case of single mothers, and so on. De Knop et al. (1999) recognize the necessity of a structural and organisational framework/programme incorporating services and personnel, who will take into consideration the needs of the athlete-students and help them successfully combine sport and academic life (Aquilina, 2013: 376) and explain how in their study, the presence of such service has made it possible for professional athletes-students to achieve both sporting and academic excellence without having to struggle to reach their sporting and academic goals. Lottes (1991), while proposing a series of service system, which could help athlete-students to better combine education and sport recognizes the important of an academic service in which career counselling, advisement, tutorial assistance would be granted. Similarly, while analysing the compatibility between the two careers in the United Kingdom, McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004: 179) recognized as the relationship with the academia as one of the main areas of concern and they further recognize the lack of understanding and support as a second main concern.

The lack of understanding and support seems to have a great degree of influence in this research. More in detail, it could be related to the person-prone nature of the support. As a matter of fact, it would appear that the degree of flexibility of each adjustment seems to be taken either by the Dean's office or directly by the professors and the understanding of the dual career of the athlete-students and the personal interest in sport of the people involved in decisions making seem to be central. In fact, it seems that people with a higher personal interest in sport and with a higher understanding of the necessity to conduct a dual career would be more willing to concede special adjustments to the students conducting a dual career. Similarly, Aquilina (2013) in one of his study recognized that if academic environment is sport friendly, also a better sport performance would be granted.

Furthermore, in the case of sport federations and (national and/or team) coaches, a person-prone nature of the flexibility and the support are granted to them. In this regard, I suggest that differences in the acceptance of their dual career could be detected. It seems in fact, that in some cases, their dual career is accepted more than in other cases, where it would appear that it is accepted only in a measure where they would not mine the chances for the federation to be successful at a national and international level. In a similar way, the research of Van Rens et al.

(2015), in which they recognized challenging for athlete-students to find the balance sport and studies and that often the athlete-students are pressured from the coaches to perform well in order to be successful.

Additionally, it could be considered as sport-prone because it would seem necessary to conduct a dual career only in the case of practicing a “lower media attention sport”. Lastly, I would suggest compatibility as result-prone because it could be argued that without being a holder of a Swiss Olympic Card Gold, Silver, Bronze or Elite, no adjustments and no flexibility would be granted to students, who are also athletes. I would consequently suggest that experiences of top-performance athletes-students are not standardized and vary over the support they receive both from their tertiary institute and their federation (and/or team). This leads also to differences in the challenges they face to be able to combine their two careers. Challenges which seem not to be dependent to this would be the challenges related to their every-day life which seem to be pretty similar among the professional athlete-students and not dependant on the support of the educational and sport stakeholders. Challenges could be for example the need to sacrifice time dedicated to the recovery or time to dedicate to the social life. I would argue that an improvement of the system, which would improve the compatibility among professional sport and education, would also mean the possibility to have a better planning and a higher possibility not to have to sacrifice important parts of their life in order to be able to be successful in both the academy and sport. The creation of a guideline, in which adjustments granted to the athletes-students at a tertiary institute are presented and the creation of a Counseling service for professional-athletes could potentially be helpful. This could require a great number of resources and time to be reasoned and carried out do to certain factors such a the amount of different requirements every sport might have.

7.1 CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF MY OWN RESEARCH

This research could be considered as pioneer in the Swiss context regarding the compatibility between professional sport and studies and identifies some perks in the current system, which could be taken into consideration to grant improvement at the current system, in order to provide to the next generations of professional athlete-student an easier experience in balancing the two career. The results of this paper are not considered as truth claims by the researcher as it is recognized that with the participation of other athletes-students, the results might have been different. In fact, in Switzerland there are more professional athletes-students, which potentially could also have a different combination between sport-university-program that could potentially lead to a different sampling. Consequently, if the participants were others, the answers to the questions could have been different and the results might have been different from the ones discovered. However, it needs to be recognized the fact that this study is characterized by a variety in its sampling, granting a great spectrum represented, which might have lead to rich data and might have granted the chance to detect central points of both the Swiss education system and the Swiss sport system, as well as about the compatibility between the two careers. In fact, in having conducted interviews with sixteen Swiss professional athletes-students (eight male and eight female professional athlete-students), in three different languages (German, French and Italian), and which attended ten different Swiss tertiary institutes. They also follow ten different programs so a great number of different realities have been shown and discussed. To this, it could be added the fact that the athletes practice a total of ten different sports granted the possibility of having a large spectrum of detection in relation to the Swiss sport federation.

Furthermore, it has to be briefly and critically analysed the fact that a total of four different languages have been employed in this Master thesis. On one hand the fact that I was able to conduct the interview in three different languages granted a wider spectrum of experiences, which would be off-limits in the case of a smaller number of languages known. On the other hand the conduction of the interviews in French and German, which are not my mother languages, could potentially have created misunderstanding with the interviewee. However, by having prepared an interview-guideline and having asked the same question, the risk should have been limited the possibility of misunderstandings and should have granted a correct understanding of

the questions by the interviewees. Moreover, the fact that this research has been written in English, adding a fourth language, should be critically discussed. On the one hand it could have lead to a loss in the meaning of the interviews, a cause of the translated version of the quotes. However, the translation of the quotes has been conducted in order maintain at its best the original meaning of it. For this reason shorter quotes complete in meaning have been implied because longer ones might potentially lead to a bigger loss in the meaning. On the other hand, the choice to write it in English opens up the possibility to have a bigger reception of this research, not only in Switzerland, but potentially also in other countries.

Lastly, as already briefly mentioned in the discussion, it has to be acknowledged that the interviews were collected between October and November 2018. This could potentially have lead to have only athletes practicing summer sports as participants of the research, preventing to be able to have also athletes of winter sport in it. The time-spectrum in which the interviews were held is in fact a period in which usually winter sport athletes with recognized national and international success are in full preparation for the next season and are also often off country. This prevented also to have a wider spectrum of sports represented in the research and consequently also a limited spectrum of experiences and necessities related solely to summer sport, preventing to have indications about the experiences and necessities of professional athletes-students, which would have had the potential to bring new insights to the research. Nonetheless, it is believed that following the nature and the timeline of this case study, it would not been possible to conduct interview so that both summer and winter sport would have been employed. It is also believed that the principal arguments might potentially apply also for winter sports.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research it has been suggested that the current Swiss system might be one of the reasons, which prevents professional athletes to dedicate themselves solely to professional sport and to have it as a “lifetime-job”. More research in relation to professional sport in Switzerland might actually also determine if this suggestion would be right or not. Additionally, research regarding the amount of money they gain could be useful to better understand the real situation in Switzerland and the real (un)sustainability of professional sport in Switzerland.

Moreover, starting from the idea that changing the Swiss system with radical adjustments in the whole system, such as reviewing the system and adapting it to other nation-state systems, could be an utopian objective. Further research in relation to the actual compatibility of professional sport and academic career could be needed and could potentially be helpful for the definition of the best adjustments to apply to the current situation in order to grant improvements to the system.

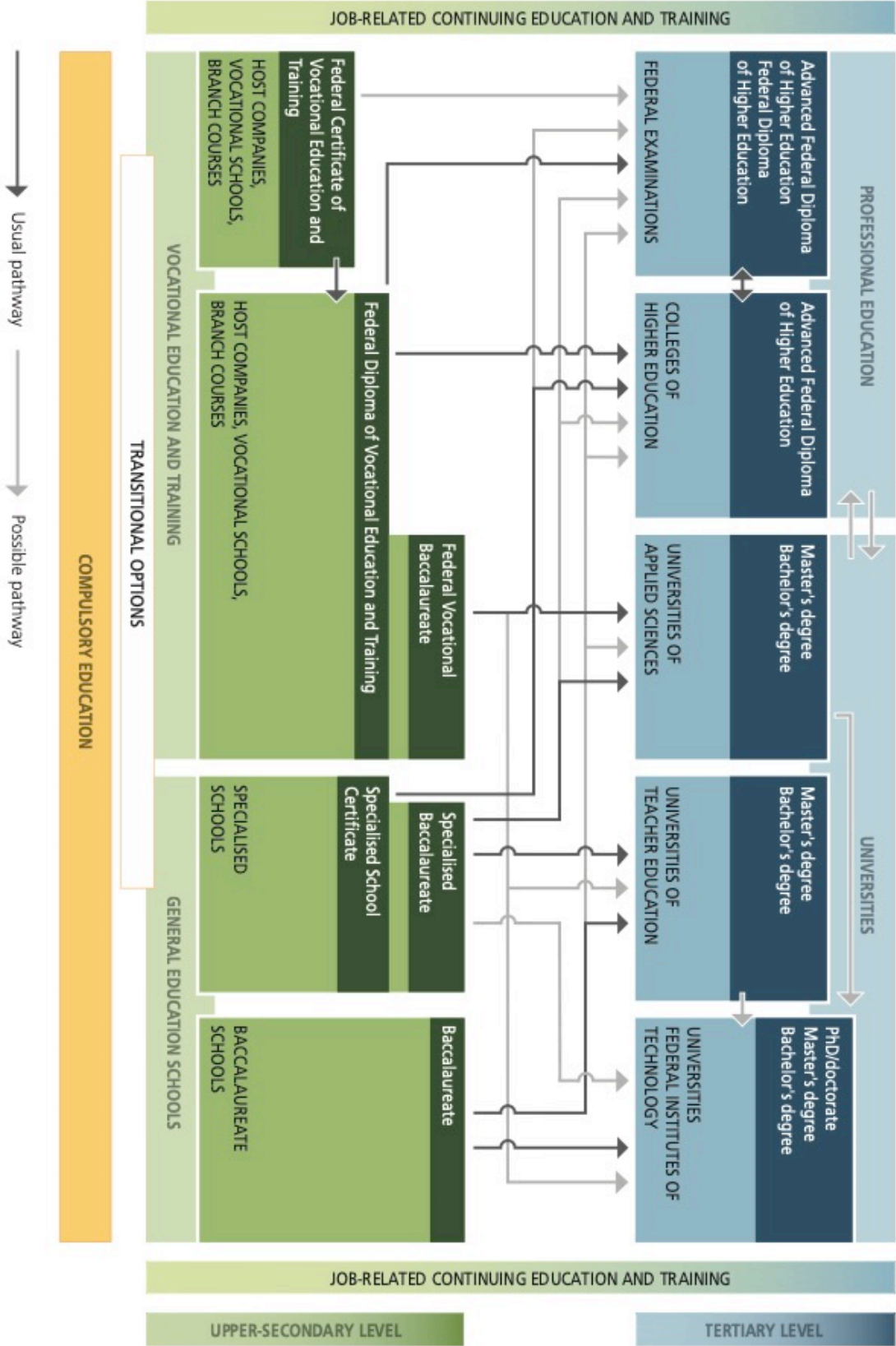
More in detail, further research could be needed both in relation to the compatibility between profession sport-studies and professional sport-work. In relation to the dual career studies-sport, in conducting a (bigger) research, with a (bigger)/other number of participants and by including both summer sport and winter sport a greater and even more representative sampling could be achieved. Further research involving the compatibility among work and professional sport could grant new insights in the Swiss system, which due to the nature of the research and its timeline, it was not possible to integrated. By conducting it in both directions there would be the potential to enlarge the spectrum investigated and it might give an even better idea of the current reality that is faced by professional athlete-students in Switzerland. I would suggest that further analysis in this direction might consequently have the potential to give more precise and detailed indications on the real status of the current system, which might lead to the identification of more fitting adjustments to the system, which would in turn facilitate an improvement of the system, not only in relation to the compatibility between sport and studies, but also between work and studies.

ANNEX 01 – RECOGNISED OR ACCREDITED SWISS HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Universities according to the Higher Education Funding and Coordination Act (HEdA)
 - Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne EPFL
 - Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich ETHZ
 - Universität Basel
 - Universität Bern
 - Université de Fribourg
 - Université de Genève
 - Université de Lausanne
 - Universität Luzern
 - Université de Neuchâtel
 - Universität St. Gallen
 - Università della Svizzera Italiana
 - Universität Zürich
- Higher Education Institutions according to HEdA
 - Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Genève, IHEID
 - Stiftung Universitäre Fernstudien Schweiz, Brig / Fondation Formation universitaire à distance, Suisse à Brigue
- Universities of Applied Sciences according to the HEdA
 - Berner Fachhochschule, BFH
 - Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz, FHNW
 - Fachhochschule Ostschweiz, FHO
 - HES-SO Haute école spécialisée de Suisse occidentale
 - Hochschule Luzern, HSLU
 - Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana, SUPSI
 - Zürcher Fachhochschule, ZFH
 - Kalaidos Fachhochschule
- Universities of Teacher Education according to diploma recognition by the EDK/CDIP
 - Haute école pédagogique des cantons de Berne, du Jura et de Neuchâtel
 - Haute école pédagogique du canton de Vaud
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Wallis | Haute école pédagogique du Valais
 - Haute école pédagogique Fribourg | Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg
 - Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik Zürich
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Graubünden | Alta scuola pedagogica dei Grigioni | Scola auta da pedagogia dal Grischun

- Pädagogische Hochschule Bern
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Luzern
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Nordwestschweiz (FHNW)
 - Pädagogische Hochschule St. Gallen
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Schaffhausen
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Thurgau
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich
 - Pädagogische Hochschule Zug
 - Schweizer Hochschule für Logopädie Rorschach SHLR
 - SUPSI - Dipartimento formazione e apprendimento (Ticino, SUPSI)
- Federal Institute according to the Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBG), Art. 48 / Loi fédérale sur la formation (LFPr), l'art. 48
 - Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, SFIVET
- Accredited institutions
 - Facoltà di Teologia di Lugano*
 - Franklin University Switzerland*
 - Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel*
 - Theologische Hochschule Chur (THC)

ANNEX 02 - SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM



ANNEX 03 - CATEGORIZATION OF THE SPORTS BY SWISS OLYMPIC

Sport	Classification	Olympic
Aereomodelling	4	Not Olympic
Alpine skiing	1	Olympic
American Football	5	Not Olympic
Archery	4	Olympic
Artistic gymnastics	1	Olympic
Artistic Swimming	3	Olympic
Badminton	3	Olympic
Ballon au poing	4	Not Olympic
Baseball/softball	5	Olympic
Basketball (3 x 3)	4	Olympic
Basketball men	4	Olympic
Basketball women	4	Olympic
Beach soccer	5	Not Olympic
Beach-volley	1	Olympic
Biathlon	2	Olympic
Bobsleigh	2	Olympic
Boccia	4	Not Olympic
Boules	5	Not Olympic
Bowling	5	Not Olympic
Boxing	4	Olympic
Canoe Polo	4	Not Olympic
Canoe Slalom	3	Olympic
Canoe sprint	4	Olympic
Casting	4	Not Olympic
Chess	5	Not Olympic
Clay shooting	5	Olympic
Curling	1	Olympic
Cycling: artistic cycling	3	Not Olympic
Cycling: BMX	3	Olympic
Cycling: cycle-ball	4	Not Olympic
Cycling: cyclocross	4	Not Olympic
Cycling: mountain bike	1	Olympic
Cycling: trial	4	Not Olympic
Dance sport: rock 'n' roll	4	Not Olympic
Dance sport: standard & latin dances	5	Not Olympic
Disabled Sport (summer)	none	Paralympic
Disabled Sport (winter)	none	Paralympic
Divers	non	Olympic / Not Olympic

Diving	3	Olympic
Duathlon	4	Not Olympic
Equestrian sports: combined driving	4	Not Olympic
Equestrian sports: dressage	4	Olympic
Equestrian sports: eventing	4	Olympic
Equestrian sports: endurance	4	Not Olympic
Equestrian sports: equestrian vaulting	4	Not Olympic
Equestrian sports: reining	5	Not Olympic
Equestrian sports: show jumping	1	Olympic
Fencing	1	Olympic
Field hockey men	4	Olympic
Field hockey women	4	Olympic
Figure inline skating	4	Not Olympic
Figure skating	3	Olympic
Freestyle skiing	1	Olympic
Gliding	4	Not Olympic
Golf	3	Olympic
Grass skiing	4	Not Olympic
Handball men	3	Olympic
Handball women	4	Olympic
Hang-gliding/paragliding	4	Not Olympic
Hornussen	5	Not Olympic
Hot air ballooning	4	Not Olympic
Ice stock	4	Not Olympic
Ice-hockey femmes	1	Olympic
Ice-hockey men	1	Olympic
Inline hockey	4	Not Olympic
Inline speed skating	4	Not Olympic
Ju-jitsu	3	Not Olympic
Judo	2	Olympic
Karate	2	Olympic
Kendo	4	Not Olympic
Kickboxing	5	Not Olympic
Luge	4	Olympic
Match crossbow	4	Not Olympic
Minigolf	4	Not Olympic
Modern pentathlon	5	Olympic
Motorcycling	4	Not Olympic
Mountain bile orienteering	4	Not Olympic
Mountain running	4	Not Olympic
Nordic Combined	5	Olympic
Nordic skiing	1	Olympic

Orienteering	2	Not Olympic
Parachuting	3	Not Olympic
Paragliding	3	Not Olympic
Pétanque	5	Not Olympic
Ping pong	4	Olympic
Pool	4	Not Olympic
Rhythmic gymnastics	3	Olympic
Road cycling	1	Olympic
Roller-hockey	4	Not Olympic
Rowing	1	Olympic
Rugby men	5	Olympic
Rugby women	5	Olympic
Sailing/windsurf	1	Olympic
Shooting sports	1	Olympic
Short Track Speed Skating	5	Olympic
Skateboard	5	Olympic
Skeleton	3	Olympic
Ski jumping	2	Olympic
Ski touring	3	Not Olympic
Ski-orientation	4	Not Olympic
Snow bike	5	Not Olympic
Snowboard	1	Olympic
Soccer men	1	Olympic
Soccer women	2	Olympic
Speed skating	3	Olympic
Sport climbing	2	Olympic
Sport in wheelchair (summer)	none	Paralympic
Sport in wheelchair (winter)	none	Paralympic
Squash	3	Not Olympic
Street-hockey	5	Not Olympic
Surface water rescue	5	Not Olympic
Surfing	5	Olympic
Swimming	1	Olympic
Swiss wrestling	5	Not Olympic
Synchronized skating	5	Not Olympic
Taekwondo	4	Olympic
Telemark	4	Not Olympic
Tennis	1	Olympic
Track and Field	1	Olympic
Track cycling	2	Olympic
Trampolining	4	Olympic
Triathlon	2	Olympic

Tug of war	4	Not Olympic
Twirling	5	Not Olympic
Underwater sports	5	Not Olympic
Unihockey men	2	Not Olympic
Unihockey women	2	Not Olympic
Volleyball men	4	Olympic
Volleyball women	3	Olympic
Wakeboard	4	Not Olympic
Water polo men	5	Olympic
Water polo women	5	Olympic
Weightlifting	5	Olympic
Wildwater canoeing	4	Not Olympic
Wrestling	3	Olympic
Wushu	4	Not Olympic

ANNEX 04 - INTERVIEW GUIDELINE – GERMAN VERSION

Teil	Hauptfrage	Vertiefungsfrage
Sport	Wie ist es dazu gekommen, dass du Sport machst?	Welche Sportarten haben dich interessiert?
		Wie ist es dazu gekommen, dass du diese Sportarten gemacht hast?
	Wie ist es gekommen, dass du dich entschieden hast SpitzensportlerIn zu werden?	Was waren deine Überlegungen?
Studium	Was kannst du mir über deine schulische Laufbahn erzählen?	
	Wie ist es gekommen, dass du dich nach der Sekundarschule entschieden hast weiter zur Schule zu gehen?	Wie war es damals für dich als Gymnasium-SchülerIn Sport und Schule zu kombinieren?
	Wie ist es gekommen, dass du dich nach der Matura entschieden hast zu studieren?	
	Wie ist gekommen, dass du X Institut für dein Studium gewählt hast?	Was waren deine Überlegungen bei der Wahl dieser Uni/Fachhochschule?
		Welche außerordentlichen Bedingungen hast du dort als SpitzensportlerIn?
	Inwiefern sind für dich auch andere Unis oder Fachhochschulen fürs Studium in Frage gekommen?	Welche außerordentlichen Bedingungen hättest du dort gehabt?
		Wie ist es gekommen, dass du dich entschieden hast, an diesen Instituten nicht zu studieren?
	Wie ist es gekommen, dass du X als Fächer für dein Studium gewählt hast?	Was hast du dir bei der Studienfachwahl für Überlegungen gemacht?
	Inwiefern sind für dich auch andere Studienfächer zur Diskussion gestanden?	Aus welchen Überlegungen hast du sie nicht gewählt?
Spitzensport & Studium	Wie schaut bei dir eine normale Woche aus?	Wie viel Zeit investierst du pro Woche für dein Studium?
		Und wie oft bist du pro Woche an der Uni?

		Wie viel Zeit investierst du pro Woche fürs Sporttraining?
	Spitzensport und Studium unter einen Hut zu bringen, ist manchmal nicht einfach. Wie war es für dich?	Welches sind die Vorteilen der Doppelkarriere als SpitzensportlerIn und StudentIn?
		Welches sind die Nachteile der Doppelkarriere als SpitzensportlerIn und StudentIn?
Herausforderungen	Was sind die Herausforderungen in deinen Alltag?	Was sind die Herausforderungen im Sport?
		Was sind die Herausforderungen im Studium?
		Was sind die Herausforderungen in anderen Lebensbereichen?
Geschlecht	Du trainierst im Männer/Frauenteam. Wie unterscheidet sich deine Karriere von den Karrieren der Frauen/Männer in deiner Sportart?	In welchen Momenten deiner Karriere war es ein Thema, dass du ein Mann/eine Frau bist?
		In welchen Momenten wirst du mit Geschlechterstereotypen konfrontiert?
		Inwiefern wurdest du schon wegen deinem Geschlecht im Sport diskriminiert?
		Wie schätzt du das Problem von Diskriminierungen im Sport ein?
		Welchen sind die Vorteile, deine Sportart als Frau/Mann zu machen?
		Welches sind die Nachteile, deine Sportart als Frau/Mann zu machen?
Schweizer Bildungssystem	Wie schätzt du das Schweizer Bildungssystem ein?	
	Wie schätzt du das Schweizer Bildungssystem in Bezug auf die Kompatibilität mit Spitzensport ein?	Was funktioniert gut?
		Was könnte verbessert werden?

	Wie schätzt du das Schweizer Bildungssystem in Bezug auf Spitzensport am Gymnasium ein?	Was funktioniert gut?
		Was könnte verbessert werden?
	Wie schätzt du das Schweizer Bildungssystem in Bezug auf Spitzensport an der Universität/Fachhochschule ein?	Welches sind die starken Seiten?
		Was könnte verbessert werden?
		Welchen außerordentlichen Bedingungen sollten ALLE SpitzensportlerInnen erhalten?
		Welche außerordentlichen Bedingungen sollten SpitzensportlerInnen deiner Sportart erhalten?
Sport in der Schweiz	Wie schätzt du die Sportförderung der öffentlichen Hand ein?	Welches sind die Stärken der Sportförderung in der Schweiz in Bezug auf Spitzensport und Studium?
		Was könnte in der Schweizer Sportförderung in Bezug auf Spitzensport und Studium verbessert werden?
Schlussfolgerungen	Wie geht es für dich weiter in Zukunft?	Wie geht es weiter im Sport?
		Wie geht es weiter im Beruf?
		Wie geht es weiter in Bezug auf Familiengründung?

ANNEX 05 – E-MAIL SUSF – GERMAN VERSION

Geschätzte Sportlerin, geschätzter Sportler,

In den vergangenen Jahren hast du für die Schweiz an einer Universiade oder einer World University Championship teilgenommen. Die Kombination von Spitzensport und Studium gehört demnach zu deinem Alltag. Im Programm "Spitzensport und Studium Swiss Olympic" fehlen uns relevante verlässliche Daten, welche die aktuelle Situation der Studierenden im Schweizer Sportsystem abbilden. Aus diesem Grund möchten wir dich gerne um deine Mithilfe für die Datenerhebung einer Masterarbeit "Spitzensport und Studium" anfragen:

Ottavia Bosello studiert Geographie an der Universität Zürich und sucht Interviewpartner/-innen, welche Spitzensport betreiben (Kriterium: Swiss Olympic Card Elite, Bronze, Silber oder Gold) und gleichzeitig an einer Schweizer Universität, pädagogischen Hochschule oder Fachhochschule studieren. Die mündlichen Interviews werden zwischen Oktober und Dezember 2018 stattfinden. Ort des Interview-Termins kann der Athlet / die Athletin bestimmen. Die Interviewdauer beträgt ca. 90 min. Die Interviewsprache ist wahlweise Deutsch, Französisch, Italienisch oder Englisch.

Falls du bereit bist, ein Interview zu geben, melde dich bitte direkt bei Ottavia (bosello.ottavia@gmail.com). Falls du weitere Athleten kennst, die die Kriterien erfüllen, darfst du diese E-Mail sehr gerne weiterleiten.

Sportliche Grüsse,

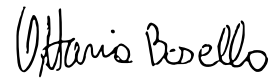
ANNEX 06 – TRANSCRIPTION NOTATIONS

Notation	Meaning
Word-	Sharp cut-off Interruption of thought (word) from personal thinking
/	Pause (1sec)
//	Longer pause (2-3sec)
///	Even longer pause (5-7 sec)
“	Start quote
”	End quote
«	Direct dialog/thought in the past (start)
»	Direct dialog/thought in the past (end)
,	Demarcation in a sentences for a better understanding of the transcript
.	Full stop or stopping fall in tone
(word) / (laugh)	Indicates a non-verbal activity
[word]	Addition by the researcher for a better understanding of the transcript

ANNEX 07 – PERSONAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

Zurich, 30.04.2019

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ottavia Bosello". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'O'.

Ottavia Bosello

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