



FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Dual career support providers: Competencies, support strategies and education

Public defense to obtain the degree of
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
of

Mr. Simon Defruyt

which will take place on

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Summary

Defining a dual career (DC) support provider as a “*professional consultant, related to an educational institute and/or an elite sport organization – or certified by one of those – that provides support to elite athletes in view of optimizing their dual career/combination of elite sport and education*”, this PhD explored the competencies they require and the support strategies they use. The PhD study consisted of five studies on DC in the European context.

The main objective of *Study 1* was to develop and validate the Dual Career Competency Questionnaire for Support Providers (DCCQ-SP), measuring the importance and possession of competencies relevant for DC support providers. Factorial validity was confirmed for the structure of the DCCQ-SP, consisting of six main factors: Advocacy and cooperation competencies, Reflection and self-management competencies, Organisational competencies, Awareness of student-athletes’ environment, Empowerment competencies, and Relationship competencies.

In *Study 2* more insight was gained into how DC support providers operate and how their competencies impact the management of challenges specific to their function. Findings revealed that experience with the specific challenges and possession of specific competencies predicted a better management of these challenges.

Study 3 examined how DC support providers support student-athletes confronted with a range of challenging situations. Results showed that DC support providers use situation-specific strategies that enhance both internal (e.g., enhancing planning competencies of student-athletes) and external (e.g., providing flexibilities) resources of student-athletes.

In *Study 4*, student-athletes’ perspectives were examined on how DC support providers can support athletes in their decision to (not) engage in a DC in higher education. The use of the Holistic Athletic Career (HAC) Model in combination with the Push Pull Anti-Push Anti-Pull framework provided data specific to the development of the student-athletes.

Finally, *Study 5* used the knowledge and instruments of the previous studies to develop, implement and evaluate education modules for DC support providers. Three modules were developed and evaluated positively: (i) DC support providers’ self-awareness and self-development, (ii) empowerment of student-athletes, and (iii) ethical principles for DC support providers.

Being the first to specifically target DC support providers’ resources, this PhD addressed a major research gap by providing data, instruments and education modules with which the professional development for DC support providers can be enhanced.

Curriculum Vitae

Since 2015, Simon Defruyt is a doctoral researcher at the research group Sport Psychology and Mental Support (SPMB) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. He has a master degree in organisational psychology and a specialized certificate in sport psychology. In his research, Simon focuses on the competencies, support strategies and education of dual career support providers. He coordinated and participated in several European DC projects, including ‘Gold in Education and Elite Sport’ ([GEES](#)), ‘Be a Winner in Elite Sport and Employment before and after athletic Retirement’ ([B-WISER](#)), [Mind the Gap](#) and the [IOC project](#) ‘The development and evaluation of training modules for DC support providers’. During his PhD, Simon co-authored the [European Handbook for DC support providers](#), developed education modules for DC support providers, and co-created an online competence evaluation for DC support providers (www.dualcareertools.com). From an applied perspective, Simon provides dual career support and workshops for student-athletes in the department ‘Topsport en Studie’ of the VUB. Finally, as a postdoctoral researcher, Simon will focus on valorizing dual career knowledge, instruments and workshops.

Simon is looking forward to engage his expertise in providing evidence-based support in multidisciplinary settings for employees with a burnout ([ReMerge](#)).