

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Ronkainen, Noora J; Ryba, Tatiana V.; Littlewood, Martin; Selänne, Harri

Title: 'School, family and then hockey!' : Coaches' views on dual career in ice hockey

Year: 2018

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Copyright: © Authors, 2018

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

Please cite the original version:

Ronkainen, N. J., Ryba, T. V., Littlewood, M., & Selänne, H. (2018). 'School, family and then hockey!' : Coaches' views on dual career in ice hockey. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 13(1), 38-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1747954117712190>

1 “School, family, and then hockey!” Coaches’ views on dual career in ice hockey

2

3 Ronkainen, N. J, Ryba, T. V., Littlewood, M., & Selänne, H. (2018). “School, family, and then
4 hockey!” Coaches’ views on dual career in ice hockey. *International Journal of Sport
5 Science & Coaching*, 13(1), 38-45. DOI: 10.1177/1747954117712190.

6 **Abstract**

7 Despite the extensive research into coaches’ roles in supporting athletic development and
8 motivation for sport, few studies have examined coaches’ attitudes and practices towards
9 athletes’ dual careers. The present study extends European research into athletes’ dual careers by
10 examining Finnish ice hockey coaches’ attitudes and practices surrounding players’ education.
11 Ten male coaches aged 28-52 participated in semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed
12 with an existential-narrative theoretical framework and with thematic and structural narrative
13 analysis. Three composite vignettes were created entitled “supporting athletic development and
14 players in reaching their own goals”, “enjoyment and physically active lifestyle” and
15 “developing good persons”. The analysis revealed that although all coaches embraced the official
16 rhetoric where school is a priority over ice hockey, most of them had few practical examples of
17 how this view had informed their coaching practice. It is concluded that young players may be
18 easily lured into dreams of professionalism, whereas coaches’ dominant narrative of education as
19 a back-up may be ineffective to spark athletes’ interest and engagement with education.

20

21 **Keywords:** youth sport, education, coaching philosophy, narrative, existential psychology

22

23 **“School, family, and then hockey!” Coaches’ views on dual career in ice hockey**

24 Unlike practitioners in many other fields of teaching and education, coaches in youth sport
25 environments often have limited formal training or financial compensation for their work (1,2). It
26 has been reported that coaches often draw their coaching philosophies and practices from various
27 resources, including accumulated coaching experience, own athletic experiences, and
28 interactions with other coaches and people affiliated with the sport clubs (3,4). With the lack of
29 formal job descriptions to outline goals and responsibilities associated with the coach role,
30 coaching practices can vary considerably across and within different sports and age groups in
31 terms of key areas of emphasis (such as, winning, participation, skill development, fun,
32 physically active lifestyles, and/or elite performance). Therefore, it has been argued that sport
33 organisations do not seem to have systematic programs to teach life and sport skills (5).

34 Gilbert and Trudel (3) examined how Canadian youth sport coaches frame their role, and
35 found nine internal components: emphasis on team, personal growth and development, sport-
36 specific development, winning, safety, positive team environment, fun, equity, and discipline. It
37 was noted that coaches’ emphasis shifted based on the age group and competitive level, and there
38 was a common implicit assumption that competitive sport required a different approach to
39 coaching than recreational sport. In another Canadian study, Wilcox and Trudel (6) examined
40 one youth ice hockey coach’s philosophy of practice and found two central principles: winning
41 and supporting player development. It was found that although the coach asserted that he
42 promoted equal playing time, his actual decisions depended on the playing time left in a game
43 and players’ performance level.

44 In addition to the growing investment in athletic development, young talented athletes are
45 also expected to complete compulsory education and make important decisions concerning

46 higher education. It has been observed that there are increasing expectations for athletes to
47 engage with education, and while some young athletes may prioritise sport over education (7,8),
48 others may be highly motivated to achieve in both domains, and may experience sport and
49 education as not only compatible, but also complementary (9,10). A number of recent studies
50 have highlighted the multiple benefits of dual careers for athletes: for example, it can provide
51 psychological benefits (e.g., balanced lifestyle, broader identity development, self-esteem, better
52 preparedness to athletic retirement), social benefits (e.g., expanded social networks and support
53 system) and financial benefits (e.g., broader skills and better chances for employment) (8-12).
54 However, the dual career pathway involves a number of challenges, including difficulty in
55 matching training and competition schedules with exams and obligatory classes, fatigue,
56 finances, limited social life, and general lack of time (11,13,14). Studies have emphasised that
57 supportive environments and collaboration between different actors at school, sports clubs and
58 home, is crucial for developing a sustainable dual career (9,14).

59 Coaches have been seen as central non-parental socialising agents in young athletes' lives,
60 (5) and have been found to impact athletes' self-perceptions and motivation in sport (8,15).
61 Therefore, it can be assumed that their views on education can also be important for athletes. Yet,
62 there is little research focused on coaches' approaches towards dual career. In professional
63 football, it has been observed that coaches may not be supportive of education as they may think
64 that it takes athletes' focus away from developing their sporting careers (16). In contrast, Knight
65 and Harwood (14) found that coaches in different youth elite sport environments were
66 consistently supportive of athletes' dual careers. However, the level of communication between
67 coaches and the educational institutions varied considerably, and while some clubs had
68 established protocols for communication, in other clubs keeping the contact was left to athletes'

69 and parents' responsibility. Moreover, in a football academy, coaches felt that interfering with
70 players' education was not their responsibility, because the club had appointed an education and
71 welfare officer to take care of such issues (14).

72 The current study extends the literature on coaching practice and athlete development by
73 examining Finnish ice hockey coaches' perspectives on athletes' dual careers. In the Finnish
74 system, sport and education have traditionally been separate, and sports participation has been
75 organised within a volunteer-based club system. A small number of upper secondary sport
76 schools were officially established in the 1990s, and only in the 2000s a more extensive sports
77 academy network was established to extend dual career support to higher education (17).
78 However, while the academy athletes participate in morning practices organised by coaching
79 staff employed by the academy, most training still takes place in sport clubs which are not
80 officially linked to educational institutions. Therefore, in the sport clubs there are no sport-
81 related consequences for poor academic performance, and the clubs' own policies are open to
82 coaches' interpretations. Moreover, coaching education is offered both by local clubs and the
83 Finnish Ice Hockey Association, but attending the courses is not a strict requirement especially
84 when coaching younger age groups. Ice hockey is the country's biggest professional sport
85 characterised by traditional masculine values, hard training load, and availability of the
86 professional athlete developmental pathway. In 2013 in Finland, more than half of the country's
87 professional athletes were ice hockey players (18). With this background, the study sought to
88 explore the following research questions:

- 89 1) How do youth ice hockey coaches articulate their attitudes towards dual career and how
90 do they view their roles in supporting players' holistic development?
- 91 2) What are the practices coaches engage in to support players' educational success?

92 3) Is the coaches' everyday coaching practice in line with their ideas surrounding dual
93 career?

94 **Methodology**

95 **Conceptual Framework**

96 The theoretical underpinning of the present study lies in existential psychology and narrative
97 inquiry. While existential philosophers have rarely articulated an existential perspective
98 specifically focused on education or coaching (19), from this approach it is generally emphasised
99 that an educator (or a coach) can never choose for the student (-athlete) when it comes to
100 attitudes towards life choices and meaningful goals (20). The existential view emphasises that
101 our lives are permeated by uncertainty, incompleteness of meanings we assign to our experience,
102 and necessity of choice (21). Young athletes face important decisions in terms of committing to
103 meaningful goals in and outside sport, and accepting responsibility for their decisions. For an
104 authentic choice, the person must feel that s/he is also free to choose otherwise, and to be able to
105 assign subjective truth to that choice (19). From an applied perspective, this means that instead
106 of seeking to indoctrinate student-athletes to a culturally dominant and preferred value, coaches
107 should help athletes develop self-awareness and understanding of their situated embodied
108 possibilities, so that they can make responsible choices for themselves (21). An existential view
109 emphasises that making a choice means not-choosing the alternative, and that some values and
110 aspirations may present themselves as incompatible. For the present study, it is of interest to
111 study how coaches articulate their views on the role of education in athletes' lives and how they
112 engage in practices which seek to influence athletes' career decisions.

113 A critical constructivist approach to narrative has been proposed as a position which can be
114 integrated with the existential view to gain a more contextualised understanding of psychological

115 phenomena (22). Narrative theory complements the existential approach by its focus on cultural
116 situatedness of experience and meaning. As Smith and Sparkes (23) asserted, “whilst people
117 often depend on and act to defend what they experience as their interior lives and their personal
118 authenticity, we draw and build our personal stories on the narrative resources that culture, local
119 worlds, and relationships make available to us” (p. 5). Analysing coaches’ stories about athlete
120 development and education not only allows for insight into how they construct meaning in
121 coaching practice, but also enables us to better understand what kind of cultural narrative
122 resources are available for them. Coaches’ stories, then, are the narrative resources that are
123 passed on to the young players to bring meaning to their experiences and to help them project
124 themselves to future possibilities in sport and life.

125 **Participants**

126 Participants of the present study were 10; male, Finnish ice hockey coaches aged 28-52. They
127 had an average of 14,3 years of coaching experience and had been players themselves before
128 becoming a coach (one of them was not coaching in the ongoing season). Most of them were
129 asked to start coaching by former teammates, friends, or other coaches. Two participants were
130 professional coaches, two were semi-professional, and six were amateur. Eight coaches were
131 working with junior teams (aged 10-17), one coach worked with a men’s team, and one coach
132 was a manager for all junior teams in his club.

133 **Procedure**

134 After obtaining institutional ethical approval for the study, participants were invited to take
135 part in a semi-structured interview. They were informed that the interview was a part of a
136 longitudinal study on athletes’ dual careers (24), and that the focus of the interview was on their
137 coaching philosophy and everyday practices. All participants provided an informed written

138 consent. The interview started with a broad opening question, “tell me your story of becoming a
139 coach”. Probes and follow-up questions were developed from participants’ stories to gain an
140 understanding of their life trajectories and contexts. We then asked participants to elaborate on
141 their coaching philosophy and their goals as a coach. For dual career, we asked for both their
142 general views (e.g., what are your views on dual career? Can a player succeed in both school and
143 sport?) and concrete experiences and practices (e.g., what are your club’s daily practices for
144 student-athletes? Do you have examples of how you follow up on your players’ educational
145 achievement?). At the end of the interview, coaches were also invited to ask questions and
146 elaborate on topics that they found important but were not covered during the interview. Five
147 coaches were interviewed in Finnish by the fourth author, and five coaches who were
148 comfortable with the language were interviewed in English by the second author.

149 **Data analysis and representation**

150 All interviews were transcribed verbatim and then read through several times by the first
151 author to become familiar with the data. Initial codes and memos were developed to record first
152 impressions and ideas, and to inductively identify core themes and narratives holding together
153 each participant’s account. Whilst five interviews had been conducted in Finnish, all notes and
154 codes were written in English to allow the second and the third author to be involved in
155 reviewing the emerging themes. Research meetings were held between the co-authors to discuss
156 impressions and ideas and to share experiences from the actual interview situations and
157 interactions that took place between the interviewer and the participant.

158 Thematic narrative analysis (25) was used to develop themes in a more systematic manner to
159 include higher and lower order themes, and to involve psychological terminology. This stage of
160 the analysis focused on identifying the building blocks or “what’s” of the stories, and sought to

161 compare and contrast central issues and themes across cases (25). In the final stage of the
162 thematic analysis, the development of themes was guided by theoretical commitments in
163 existential psychology and specifically the concepts of authenticity and choice. The thematic
164 approach was then complemented by structural narrative analysis which sought to discern the
165 core plot and the narrative types underlying each individual narrative (26). As Smith and Sparkes
166 (26) explained, a structural analysis allows for identifying “the type(s) of narrative a person
167 draws on from culture to shape their personal stories, and better know what type of story is
168 guiding a person’s actions, thoughts, hopes, emotions, and psychological health” (p. 283). In this
169 stage, the analysis focused on one participant’s account at a time to understand the internal logic
170 and connections within each story. After completing a structural analysis for each participant’s
171 story, similarities across cases were identified to form a typology of storylines.

172 In order to preserve participants’ voices, we represent our results in a form of composite
173 vignettes (27), where accounts of multiple coaches were amalgamated into three different
174 narratives. In constructing the vignettes, we drew upon the structural analysis where we had
175 identified three different storylines, and identified narrative segments in interview transcripts that
176 most clearly illuminated these narrative types. At this point, the selected interview segments that
177 were in Finnish were translated to English by the first author. Narrative segments were then
178 merged through re-organising and connecting sections to develop coherent and evocative stories
179 using the participants’ first person voice. Insertions from the researchers were kept to the
180 minimum and were only used to clarify the context, correct grammar, or connect sentences
181 (28,29). Narrative segments were included from all participants’ stories.

Results

182

183 **Vignette 1: Supporting athletic development and players in reaching their own goals**

184 *As a coach, I never had personal goals, for example I wanted to become a national league*
185 *coach or something like that. All my work has targeted that individual players would develop as*
186 *much as possible, that I could tell and teach those things that I know, and in that way help them*
187 *move to a higher level. My main idea has been that I can give something to the players in their*
188 *pursuit of their goals... So that as many as possible would become as good players as they can*
189 *and have the potential to become [professional]. We try to give them the possibility to play*
190 *hockey, try to teach them to be better players and we try to teach them why you should practice*
191 *so many hours, if you want to go become pro players.*

192 *Of course the goal is that the team I am coaching at that time will be as successful as*
193 *possible. The last five [players], I had to teach them more and more, but they can't be a part of*
194 *the game team. It [also] takes too much practice time. Because we [the club] try to make players*
195 *who can go to NHL, so we have to take care of the best players. So [the coaches] have to find the*
196 *balance.*

197 *Many youth players have the dream of playing in NHL, but in reality only a small percentage*
198 *will actually get there. The reality is that, even from the better players, only few even become*
199 *national league players. Education, on the other hand, opens possibilities for the future. If and*
200 *when they don't become professionals, they have [other] options in life. It is wise to tell the big*
201 *mass quite early, that although they should have goals [in hockey], it should not come at the*
202 *expense of education. It's important that coaches and team leaders give the message that*
203 *education is truly important. [So] I try to keep them in that level that school comes first, and then*
204 *hockey second. Unfortunately, many [professional] hockey players only start thinking what they*

205 *should do after they are over 30, and in these days it is difficult to find work without proper*
206 *education. Yesterday, I was talking to one former pro player who told me that he knows a lot of*
207 *players who are age of thirty-five, and they have nothing.*

208 *We don't really formally follow [how they do at school], but in the normal interaction with*
209 *players we ask them how they are doing – also at school and in broader life, is everything in*
210 *balance? We often have personal discussions [with players], [but] I admit that they're often*
211 *much about hockey. Usually only when they already have difficulties [at school], then we*
212 *interfere. Maybe we should be interested in these things earlier... For example, I don't know my*
213 *players' [grades] – or how they are doing at school.*

214 **Vignette 2: Enjoyment and physically active lifestyle**

215 *I think that I'm more of an educator than a coach of the skills. Of course I have realised that*
216 *from these 24 boys, zero to three go to the top. [For] others, the more important goals are that*
217 *they now enjoy, they get to the physically active lifestyle model, and enjoy ice hockey. I want to*
218 *feel like players enjoy training and doing what we do, that's definitely the most important,*
219 *because it's their hobby, still they are not professionals. I'm not professional either so that's,*
220 *that's probably the most important thing. Of course we do as high quality training as possible, so*
221 *we enable those, who in [the] future may [be]come top players, [to] have the skill level at the*
222 *right things in the juniors. But that's just, you know, we enable. So we see the other goals, or I*
223 *see the other goals even more important than the skill level of ice hockey.*

224 *We actually talked about it yesterday, that if we are coming to training it takes probably two*
225 *hours of your day, there is still 22 hours... I asked them what else is important and then first was*
226 *probably eating, I guess, then sleep, and third was school so... It's very important how the*
227 *coaches see the players, you know, how they feel and what's important to their life. They are*

228 *teenagers, they are young adults, there is something more than just ice hockey. Always when I*
229 *have those talks with players, we always talk about school as well. Those young boys are, you*
230 *know, “no it’s not fun and it’s boring” and so on. I will try to respond to that, no but you have to*
231 *take care of that. That’s the most important thing for you, beyond the ice hockey. You have to*
232 *remember that not every one of you is going to make it as a career, so school is still important.*

233 *We have had couple of these events, when we had a game or training session on Saturday,*
234 *[and] the school [also] had a school day. And it’s very obvious for me that of course they go to*
235 *school. So you know, parents are, maybe they are not even asking anymore, but at the first time*
236 *they were asking what to do. I said, go to school, of course you go to school, and then if the*
237 *school days ends so that you can come to the games, you come to the games. [And when] we*
238 *were in the West coast, we played two [away] games there, it was a Sunday. And when we came*
239 *back, there was like one hour that everybody had to have a school book with them, and they had*
240 *to at least be quiet. I don’t know if they did anything, but at least it was required. I said, [it’s] the*
241 *same, I’m not playing with my [phone]. I’m reading as well, so it’s good for me as well.*

242 **Vignette 3: Developing “good persons”**

243 *[For me], it’s not so much about trying to teach them how to be athletes, it’s more like trying*
244 *to teach them how to be a good person, how to be... How to live their life. And [I value] the*
245 *possibility that I can be a part of that story, be a part of their everyday life. I don’t know what*
246 *they’ll become, but to be a part of that story and, I don’t know, to have some sort of effect on*
247 *them when they grow up. [So] we’re talking pretty much only about being a good person and*
248 *then maybe something good will happen in hockey as well. And [also to be] a good ice hockey*
249 *player, but main thing is [being a] good person.*

250 *[As you grow older] you start seeing that hockey is only such a small part of this bigger*
251 *picture. I guess that's something that I try to tell the kids as well. Realising there are so many*
252 *things in life besides hockey. [But] I think in our sport, it's maybe harder than in other sports,*
253 *because everybody knows that you can earn money from playing hockey. It's really hard to tell a*
254 *16 or 17 or 18 year old kid that you will need this education in 20 years' time. They don't buy it.*
255 *They don't care. So that's why it's really important that you start to influence them early enough,*
256 *in third grade or fourth grade or fifth or sixth grade, so that it's kind of built in to them.*

257 *[In] every team I [have been] coaching, we have... [the] guys take their school books with*
258 *them. We study on the bus and it's a very good thing. In my team, 12 players [have] school*
259 *grades over the nine point [average]. For me it's [a] very big thing. [If the guy has] three or four*
260 *exams next week, I can say hey, go home and study. I don't want them [to] focus only [on] hockey*
261 *because [so few] guys every year go to the top. But I want them to practice as well as they can.*
262 *And they [also] go to school and make a good life.*

263 *I think the stories of other athletes [are important]. They hear stories that some pro athlete is*
264 *saying that I went through that path [combining sport and education]. If they are saying that*
265 *yeah it was doable, and it was easy, and yeah they really helped me go through that path... I*
266 *have a couple of good stories [about top players] that I keep on telling to the guys, but not too*
267 *many.*

268 **Discussion**

269 **The first vignette exemplified the dominant narratives of sport coaching where the main task**
270 **of the coach is to focus on athletic development. This narrative structure, where the most**
271 **important aspects of sport are athletic development and achievement, penetrates all aspects of**
272 **elite sport and has been identified not only in elite athletes' stories (30), but also in research**

273 literature asserting that “no doubt a degree of agreement exists in and about coaching, in that its
274 primary purpose is about athlete learning and performance improvement” (31) p. 211). Within
275 this narrative, discussion about education was tightly connected to the limited prospects for
276 youth players to reach the professional status, and the short time span of the professional athletic
277 career. As such, these narratives conformed to the dominant dual career discourses, where
278 education has often been viewed as a way to prepare for a post-athletic career (9), or as a back-
279 up plan for youth athletes that get de-selected, or for some other reason can’t secure professional
280 contracts (16). For the participants represented in the first vignette, the coach’s job was to
281 provide the possibility for the talented athletes to reach the professional status, but
282 simultaneously outline realistic expectations “for the masses” for whom hockey would not
283 provide a professional pathway.

284 Albeit recognising that the “official truth is, school first and hockey second” (coach 8),
285 coaches within the first vignette had few examples about how that “truth” informed their daily
286 practices and interactions with the players. Aware of the official club policies that for coaches “a
287 minimum is that they take school seriously” (coach 6), all coaches mentioned that school is one
288 of the topics they take up in one-to-one developmental discussions with players. However, when
289 asked for more concrete examples, most of them did not recall specific incidents when they
290 would have discussed education with their team, and did not know what kind of grades the
291 players had at school. That is, whilst coaches were unanimous about the value of education for
292 youth players, for most of them it had few implications for their practice. Such findings resonate
293 with a study by Bean and Forneris (32) who found that coaches’ recognition of the value of life
294 skills doesn’t necessarily imply having the skills explicitly integrated into coaching practices.

295 Within the first vignette, education was narratively constructed as “a plan B” for those who
296 don’t “make it”, rather than something that should be pursued for its own sake. Similar to the
297 observations by McGillivray and Macintosh (16), we may ask whether the hockey culture is
298 experiencing a “movement towards a forced – or instrumental – engagement with education”
299 (p.383). The lack of authentic alignment with the educational discourses was illustrated by coach
300 8, who confessed that as a coach who is not so emotionally engaged, “it's easy to tell them that
301 you have to go to school and there is more [in life] than to play hockey”. However, as a father he
302 had followed his more authentic narrative and advised his talented son that, “you have the chance
303 to be a [professional] hockey player so practice a lot”. As such, it was implied that the
304 professional prospects in ice hockey may easily lure the young players, their parents, and perhaps
305 some coaches into the “NHL dream” narrative, leaving little consideration for exploring
306 alternative life projects outside sports.

307 The second vignette illustrated the tension between performance and participation
308 approaches to coaching. Such tensions have enduring presence in the narrative context of Nordic
309 sport culture (33), and the vignettes revealed ambiguity within the ice hockey coaching
310 community. For younger age groups, sport was mainly framed as a hobby rather than a
311 (potential) career; however, in older age groups, the approaches were diverse. The coaches
312 telling the second storyline had made an active choice to prioritise the non-elite pathway whilst
313 also seeking to provide adequate challenge to the potential elite players. Given that sport
314 participation would remain a hobby for the large majority of young players, schoolwork was
315 described as the natural priority.

316 In contrast to the first vignette, the coaches in the second vignette could tell stories about
317 concrete situations when they had discussed education and broader life issues with young

318 athletes and their parents. As such, the second vignette illustrated a closer alignment between
319 stated personal values and actual practices than the first vignette. However, requiring athletes to
320 sit quiet on the bus without checking if they were actually doing their schoolwork could still be
321 interpreted as formal compliance with the club policy, rather than actual interest in players'
322 educational engagement. Storying the coaching practice as a hobby indicated a lack of
323 seriousness in engagement with the coach role, and perhaps undermined the potential influence a
324 coach could have on players' life choices.

325 The third vignette was similar to the second one in constructing the coach's role as an
326 educator rather than a teacher of athletic skills. The vignette aligns closely with the life skills
327 literature (34) where sport is seen as one context for broader development as a person. Within
328 this vignette, coaches also rejected the belief that mere participation would produce "good
329 persons" (32), and aligned themselves with the approach that personal development should be
330 actively facilitated by the coach. Similar to the second vignette, the third vignette described
331 actual strategies used to engage players with schoolwork, and also exemplified the coach's
332 knowledge of and pride in his players' educational achievement. Yet, the vignette also contained
333 a more reflective account about the challenges in trying to influence young athletes whose
334 dreams and aspirations may not coincide with adults' advice and official club policies. Similar to
335 coaches in the study by Gould et al., (35), the coach stressed the importance of developing a
336 good relationship with players in order to have an impact on their personal development. This
337 coach also talked about the need for subtle means to influence players' life decisions, rather than
338 simply telling the athletes that they must do their schoolwork properly. Telling stories about
339 professional players who had successfully completed the dual career pathway was given as an
340 example of how education could be presented as an attractive life project for players'

341 consideration. Such approach has similarities with the existential view on education, which
342 Saeverot (20) described as a “kind of seduction where the teacher can ensnare the pupils, making
343 them aware of, and perhaps interested in, another perspective which challenges their present
344 attitude to life” (p.558).

345 Overall, the coaches put little trust on youth players’ ability to make responsible choices
346 concerning education. Finnish youth national teams’ recent successes and consequent media
347 attention were mentioned as sources of youth players’ unrealistic dreams, and coaches’ dominant
348 perception was that everyone wanted to become a professional player. Whilst all coaches
349 engaged with educational discourses and told that they considered athletes’ schoolwork
350 important, the means to communicate these values to players were generally not well reflected
351 upon. None of the coaches talked about working to increase athletes’ awareness of their
352 possibilities and capacity to make choices, whereas many of them described authoritarian
353 practices to ensure that athletes engaged with schoolwork. The danger is that, despite the good
354 intentions, such approaches may actually increase the distance between the coach and the athlete
355 (20). That is, the dominant authoritarian attitudes combined with an instrumental approach to
356 education (a back-up or a plan B) does not seem to enhance athletes’ capacity for choice, and
357 might not lead them to view education as an intrinsically meaningful life project.

358 From an applied perspective, it is important to recognise that if sport clubs wish to enact a
359 policy about dual careers, coaches also need more support in developing means to implement
360 that policy to their practical work. Many participants in the study mentioned that coaches “must
361 be interested in players’ education”, but how this could be done was less well articulated. This
362 finding supports previous studies that indicate that coaches seem to value life skills development
363 in sport, but often might not know how to promote it, or describe how the positive development

364 takes place (32). A specific structural challenge for the Finnish context (in comparison to the
365 American model, for example) is the separation of sport and school, and coaches often had
366 difficulty in gaining information about what was happening in the schools. They didn't have
367 access to any school reports, often didn't know the teachers, and mentioned that some parents
368 did not want them to interfere with something that was "not their business". To advance
369 integration of personal development and dual career agendas into coaching practices, it is
370 important to support individual coaches through coaching education, but also target structures to
371 facilitate better communication between sport clubs and schools.

372 Based on the interviews, it is clear that the coaches were informed about official policies and
373 had adopted the dominant dual career discourses, constructing education as a back-up plan for
374 those who couldn't realise their dreams in ice hockey. Yet, researchers and policy makers
375 promoting these discourses should be aware of the instrumental ethos implied in these views, and
376 seek to broaden the discussions to include transformative potential and intrinsic value of
377 education for athletes, regardless whether sport becomes their professional pathway or not. It
378 may be questioned whether dominant narratives communicated within current dual career
379 policies encourage athletes to engage in personal reflection in order to make authentic choices
380 concerning their embodied possibilities.

381 As a limitation of the present study, using one-shot interviews with coaches only revealed
382 how they narratively construct their coaching practice, and not what they actually do. It is likely
383 that social desirability of presenting positive attitudes towards dual career played a role in how
384 coaches co-constructed their stories with the researchers. Moreover, given that that the stated
385 coaching philosophies and actual practices often misalign (36), using observations in
386 combination with interviews could develop a more complete picture of practices surrounding

387 dual career. In addition, some coaches had not given much prior thought to how they approach
388 dual career, and therefore they might not have been able to articulate their views in rich detail.
389 This could have been enhanced by, for example, multiple interviews or sending the coaches some
390 questions for reflection prior to the interview.

391 **Conclusions**

392 The present study contributed to the limited literature on coaches' strategies to foster athletes'
393 personal development with a specific focus on dual career. All study participants agreed that dual
394 career was important for all athletes, either as an alternative life plan if the dreams of
395 professionalism would not become true, or for facilitating the transition out from professional
396 sport to the job market. Yet, there was a great diversity in the degree of integration of these
397 attitudes to the coaching practice, from being an integral aspect of daily communication, to a
398 topic that was taken up only in formal developmental discussion with players. In future studies, it
399 will be valuable to examine how coaches and other support staff engage in dual career discourses
400 in various national and sport sub-cultural contexts in order to better understand how current dual
401 career policies are implemented in clubs and teams. Moreover, it is the researchers' task to
402 challenge the dominant dual career discourses that inform policies, and question what these
403 discourses work to omit and whether there are alternative (and better?) ones.

404 **References**

- 405 (1) Schlechter CR, Rosenkranz RR, Milliken GA, Dzewaltowski DA. Physical activity levels
406 during youth sport practice: does coach training or experience have an influence? *J Sports Sci*
407 2016;1-7.
- 408 (2) Ewing ME, Seefeldt VD, Brown TP. Role of organized sport in the education and health
409 of American children and youth. In: Poinsett A, editor. *The role of sports in youth development*
410 New York: Carnegie Corporation; 1996. p. 1-157.
- 411 (3) Gilbert WD, Trudel P. Role of the coach: How model youth team sport coaches frame
412 their roles. *Sport psychologist* 2004;18(1):21-43.

- 413 (4) Werthner P, Trudel P. A new theoretical perspective for understanding how coaches learn
414 to coach. *The Sport Psychologist* 2006;20(2):198-212.
- 415 (5) Petitpas AJ, Cornelius AE, Van Raalte JL, Jones T. A framework for planning youth sport
416 programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist* 2005;19:63-80.
- 417 (6) Wilcox S, Trudel P. Constructing the coaching principles and beliefs of a youth ice
418 hockey coach. *Avante-Ontario* 1998;4:39-66.
- 419 (7) Cosh S, Tully PJ. "All I have to do is pass": A discursive analysis of student athletes' talk
420 about prioritising sport to the detriment of education to overcome stressors encountered in
421 combining elite sport and tertiary education. *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2014 3;15(2):180-189.
- 422 (8) Tekavc J, Wylleman P, Erpič SC. Perceptions of dual career development among elite
423 level swimmers and basketball players. *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2015;21:27-41.
- 424 (9) Aquilina D. A Study of the Relationship Between Elite Athletes' Educational
425 Development and Sporting Performance. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*
426 2013;30(4):374-392.
- 427 (10) Brettschneider W. Risks and Opportunities: Adolescents in Top-Level Sport. Growing
428 Up with the Pressures of School and Training. *European Physical Education Review*
429 1999;5(2):121-133.
- 430 (11) Stambulova NB, Engström C, Franck A, Linnér L, Lindahl K. Searching for an optimal
431 balance: Dual career experiences of Swedish adolescent athletes. *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2015;21:4-
432 14.
- 433 (12) Debois N, Ledon A, Wylleman P. A lifespan perspective on the dual career of elite male
434 athletes. *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2015;21:15-26.
- 435 (13) O'Neill M, Allen B, Calder AM. Pressures to perform: An interview study of Australian
436 high performance school-age athletes' perceptions of balancing their school and sporting lives.
437 *Performance Enhancement & Health* 2013;2(3):87-93.
- 438 (14) Knight CJ, Harwood CG. The role of the entourage in supporting elite athlete
439 performance and educational outcomes 2015.
- 440 (15) Amorose A, Horn T. Intrinsic motivation: relationships with collegiate athletes' gender,
441 scholarship status, and perceptions of their coaches' behavior. *J Sport Exercise Psychol*
442 2000;22(1):63-84.
- 443 (16) McGillivray D, McIntosh A. 'Football is My Life': Theorizing Social Practice in the
444 Scottish Professional Football Field. *Sport in society* 2006;9(3):371-387.
- 445 (17) Lämsä J, Anu, Nenonen J, Manninen T, Puhakka A, Kainulainen J, Hokkanen T. Kuinka
446 hitaita urheilijat ovat? Selvitys urheilijoiden korkea-asteen opintojen etenemisestä. 2014;47.
- 447 (18) Lämsä J. Suomessa 1195 ammattuurheilijaa [There are 1195 professional athletes in
448 Finland]. *Kihu*, Jyväskylä. 2014.
- 449 (19) Baker BF. Existential philosophers on education. *Educational Theory* 1966;16(3):216-
450 224.
- 451 (20) Sæverot H. Kierkegaard, seduction, and existential education. *Studies in Philosophy and*
452 *Education* 2011;30(6):557-572.
- 453 (21) Spinelli E. Existential coaching. In: Cox E, Bachkirova T, Clutterbuck DA, editors. *The*
454 *complete handbook of coaching*. 2nd ed. London: Sage; 2014. p. 91-103.
- 455 (22) Richert AJ. *Integrating existential and narrative therapy: A theoretical base for eclectic*
456 *practice*. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, PA; 2010.
- 457 (23) Smith B, Sparkes AC. Narrative inquiry in sport and exercise psychology: What can it
458 mean, and why might we do it? *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2009;10(1):1-11.

- 459 (24) Ryba TV, Aunola K, Kalaja S, Selänne H, Ronkainen NJ, Nurmi J. A new perspective on
460 adolescent athletes' transition into upper secondary school: A longitudinal mixed methods study
461 protocol. *Cogent Psychology* 2016;1142412.
- 462 (25) Riessman CK. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage; 2008.
- 463 (26) Smith B, Sparkes AC. *Narrative analysis and sport and exercise psychology:*
464 *Understanding lives in diverse ways*. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* 2009 02;10(2):279-288.
- 465 (27) Spalding NJ, Phillips T. Exploring the use of vignettes: from validity to trustworthiness.
466 *Qualitative Health Research* 2007;17:954-962.
- 467 (28) Ryba TV. *Researching Children in Sport: Methodological Reflections*. *Journal of*
468 *Applied Sport Psychology* 2008;20(3):334-348.
- 469 (29) Blodgett AT, Schinke RJ. "When you're coming from the reserve you're not supposed to
470 make it": Stories of Aboriginal athletes pursuing sport and academic careers in "mainstream"
471 cultural contexts. *Psychol Sport Exerc* 2015;21:115-124.
- 472 (30) Douglas K, Carless D. *Abandoning The Performance Narrative: Two Women's Stories of*
473 *Transition from Professional Sport*. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 2009 Apr;21(2):213-
474 230.
- 475 (31) Jones RL, Edwards C, Tuim Viotto Filho, I. A. Activity theory, complexity and sports
476 coaching: an epistemology for a discipline. *Sport, Education and Society* 2016;21(2):200-216.
- 477 (32) Bean C, Forneris T. *Is Life Skill Development a By-Product of Sport Participation?*
478 *Perceptions of Youth Sport Coaches*. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 2016:1-17.
- 479 (33) Eichberg H, Loland S. *Nordic sports—from social movements via emotional to bodily*
480 *movement—and back again?* *Sport in Society* 2010;13(4):676-690.
- 481 (34) Gould D, Carson S. *Life skills development through sport: Current status and future*
482 *directions*. *International review of sport and exercise psychology* 2008;1(1):58-78.
- 483 (35) Gould D, Collins K, Lauer L, Chung Y. *Coaching life skills through football: A study of*
484 *award winning high school coaches*. *Journal of applied sport psychology* 2007;19(1):16-37.
- 485 (36) Carless D, Douglas K. *Stories as Personal Coaching Philosophy*. *International Journal of*
486 *Sports Science & Coaching* 2011 03;6(1):1-12.
- 487