



**An exploration into the role of the guidance counsellor
when supporting dual career student-athletes.**

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MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development

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Title of Research Study:

An exploration into the role of guidance counsellors when supporting dual career student-athletes.

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely his own work. No element of the work described in this dissertation has been previously submitted for any degree in University of Limerick, or in any other institution. I agree that the University of Limerick library may lend or copy this dissertation on request.

Signature

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Glossary

CAO	Central Applications Office
DC	Dual Career
DCDE	Dual Career Development Environment
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
ECO-DC	Ecology of Dual Careers
EHSRC	Educational and Health Sciences Research Committee
EU	European Union
GEES	Gold in Education and Elite Sport
HAC	Holistic Athletic Career
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
PE	Physical Education
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education

Abstract

The main aim of this study was to explore the role of guidance counsellors when supporting dual career student-athletes. The simultaneous endeavour of educational or vocational achievement and sporting achievement is referred to as a “dual career” in sport psychology literature (Stambulova *et al.*, 2015). Influences on the effectiveness of guidance counsellor practice with student-athletes were examined. These included the existing knowledge and perceptions that guidance counsellors have on dual careers, the supports they already offer student-athletes, and the influence that whole school support plays. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC 2017) in Ireland dictate that effective practice ensures theoretical knowledge and skills in personal, educational, and vocational counselling and the psychological development of students. The term dual career is not present in the relevant Irish educational literature, resulting in a lack of knowledge and awareness of the term among guidance counsellors. This research obtained data through seven semi-structured interviews that were coded using thematic analysis.

Findings on the role of guidance counsellors in supporting student-athletes were framed under five themes. Firstly, guidance counsellor’s level of confidence when supporting student-athletes was examined. Despite a lack of awareness of the term dual career, guidance counsellors stated they felt confident in providing adequate support. Secondly, the vocational support provided to student-athletes related to guidance counsellor’s understanding of the influence that sport participation has on career decision making. The third theme looked at the personal and educational challenges faced by student-athletes and the impact this can have on identity development. Additionally, the professional role of the guidance counsellor was examined with an inconsistent approach to supporting student-athletes being highlighted among participants. Finally, the effectiveness of a whole school approach to supporting student-athletes was explored. All guidance counsellors believe that appropriate support can only be achieved through a whole school approach. The implications of these findings are also outlined in this study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the context and justification of the research study. The researcher's positionality is described. The aim and objectives are identified, and the research methodology outlined. A brief description of chapters one to six is also given to provide an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 Context and Justification for Research Study

This research study explores the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student-athletes in post-primary schools. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) is the professional body for guidance counsellors in Ireland. At post-primary level, Irish guidance counsellors are encouraged to engage in a holistic approach when supporting students, considering the areas of personal, educational, and vocational guidance (IGC 2017). In providing this model of support, guidance counsellors are required to practice a knowledgeable and professional practice in the provision of these three areas (IGC 2017).

However, the level of this holistic support being offered to dual career student-athletes is called into question in this study. The European Union Dual Career Guidelines (2012) recognise the occurrence of an athlete's dual career during primary, second and third-level education. Further international research on dual careers has paved the way for the Holistic Athletic Career model (Wylleman *et al.*, 2013), which addresses the multi-dimensional features across an athlete's dual career. Despite this, the term dual career is absent from Irish educational literature, particularly, all guidance policy, guidelines, and frameworks. Responsible in the role of providing students with personal, educational, and vocational guidance (IGC 2017) throughout their secondary education, the question of how knowledgeable guidance counsellors are in supporting dual career student-athletes arises. This study will shine a light on the role that guidance counsellors currently play in supporting student-athletes, as well as their existing knowledge and perceptions of dual careers.

1.2 Positionality of the Researcher

This section acknowledges the positionality of the researcher in this study when gathering data, interpreting, analysing, and presenting findings (Thomas 2017). The researcher's positionality in this study is that of a trainee guidance counsellor, working as a teacher in a co-educational secondary school. The school has two full time guidance counsellors on site and offers a rich selection of sports across all disciplines. The researcher has played sport all his life, ensuring the navigation of a dual career throughout second and third level education. The researcher still currently plays sport at a high level, as well as coaching both school and club sport teams that are inevitably made up of student-athletes. These interests sparked a curiosity related to the support offered to student-athletes pursuing both educational and sporting achievements.

Due to the researcher's close proximity to the study, the position of a reflexive researcher was adhered to throughout. The sample cohort were self-selected following an email distributed to the members of the local IGC branch. This email was distributed by the chairperson of the branch. This ensured that the researcher did not previously know any participants, and vice versa, ensuring the researchers close association with sport was not considered during the interview process. In combating the challenge of "continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation" (Berger 2015, p.220) that present because of the researcher's positionality, a reflective journal was kept during the research study. Initial reflections were recorded in the journal after each interview, with additional notes being added during the transcription and coding process. This reflective practice helped to nullify any biases that arose during the research, helping to facilitate the practice of a reflexive researcher.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to explore the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting student-athletes navigating a dual career during post-primary education.

The core objectives of the research are as follows:

- To identify and analyse all existing literature related to the role of the guidance counsellor in post-primary schools. Considering the relevant dual career literature, review the potential influence they have on dual career student-athletes.
- To obtain and analyse data that represents the experiences and existing roles of Irish guidance counsellors in the post-primary setting through semi-structured interviews with participants.

- To contextualise the primary findings of the research with the literature to gain insights into the support that guidance counsellors, and their schools, offer dual career student-athletes. These findings will ensure that recommendations for policy, practice and research can be provided.

1.4 Research Methodology

This research is conducted under the interpretivist paradigm. Seven semi-structured interviews were held with guidance counsellors, who were self-selected IGC branch members, following an email from the branch chairperson, acting as gatekeeper. All interviews were held using Skype for Business and recorded using the Skype for Business Server software. All participants were given pseudonyms, each interview was then transcribed verbatim, with member checking carried out with all participants. Each recording was deleted immediately after transcription, in accordance with the University of Limerick Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHSRC). Thematic analysis was used to extract themes related to the role of guidance counsellors in supporting student-athletes in their schools. These findings contextualised with the literature to provide a discussion of the topic. With the findings of the study in mind, recommendations for policy, practice and research were offered.

1.5 Overview of Thesis Structure

This section will present the structure of the thesis and content of subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two – Literature Review: This chapter will provide an analysis of existing literature relevant to the role of the guidance counsellor in an Irish context, with relevance placed on the role of guidance counsellors in the post-primary school setting. A definition of the term dual career is given before presenting European and International literature related to the topic. Research gives insights into dual career pathways and transitions, motivations, and the psychological and psychosocial elements of finding a dual career balance. The role of dual career development environments is also highlighted before the chapter is concluded.

Chapter Three – Methodology: Chapter three serves to outline the practical approaches and the philosophical viewpoints of the research project. Firstly, the research questions are addressed and established. A rationale for the chosen research paradigm then follows. Thirdly, the research methodology is examined in relation to the sampling, data collection and data

analysis to be used. The reliability, validity and reflexivity of the research is also discussed. Finally, the ethical issues and considerations involved in the research study will be addressed.

Chapter Four – Findings: The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings from the seven semi-structured interviews, in which guidance counsellors highlighted their knowledge, experience, and attitudes towards supporting dual career student-athletes in their school. In analysing this data, five main themes and subsequent subthemes are identified. These themes and subthemes reflect the complex nature of the role of the guidance counsellor in relation to: their knowledge and training of dual careers, the opportunities that a dual career can offer, the challenges that student-athletes face, and the role of the whole school in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Chapter Five – Discussion: This chapter will contextualise the findings of the literature review with the research findings of the study. These findings will be addressed in the context of the research questions of the study. The discussion is presented using the five themes that emerged from the data analysis. It will synthesise the key learnings which arose from the literature review with these main themes derived from the research.

Chapter Six – Conclusion: Chapter six will discuss the conclusions of this research in relation to the aims and objectives of the study. The strengths and limitations of the study are examined. Recommendations are suggested within the areas of policy, practice, and future research. Reflexivity in relation to the personal and professional learning involved in the research process are also discussed before concluding the chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

This introduction has outlined the context and justification of the research study. The positionality of the researcher is determined, with the aim and objectives also identified. The research methodology was addressed before an overview of the plan and structure of the thesis was also provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis of the existing literature and material relevant to the research study. The role of the guidance counsellor in an Irish context is first outlined, with relevance placed on the role of the guidance counsellor in a post-primary school setting. An introduction to the term dual career is given before presenting the European and International literature related to the topic. Research gives insights into dual career pathways and transitions, motivations, psychological and psychosocial elements of finding a dual career balance. The role of dual career development environments is also outlined in this chapter.

2.1 Guidance Counsellor Role

The role of a guidance counsellor is one which spans over the personal, social, educational and vocational elements of a student's life. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE 2004) define the aim of guidance counselling in post-primary education as helping young people to "make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices" (p. 12). The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC 2017) in Ireland dictate that effective practice ensures theoretical knowledge and skills in personal, educational, and vocational counselling and the psychological development of clients. Essential areas such as educational pathways, labour market information, psychometric assessment, planning, and management skills are essential in developing a professional and comprehensive practice (IGC 2017). Considering policies and documents from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), in conjunction with the NCGE, a framework of personal, educational and vocational guidance practice is outlined. This holistic approach is highlighted in The Quality in Guidance Report (2007), stating a guidance counsellor's role must "ensure the needs of those seeking guidance are met" (p. 11). Throughout the literature, this holistic role of the guidance counsellor recognises the interrelated nature of the personal, educational and vocational aspects of a student's life and the impact they can have on a student's choices, transitions, and psychological development.

In relation to personal counselling, an emphasis is placed on the guidance counsellor's role in forming and developing a trustworthy and confidential relationship with students, using the appropriate counselling skills and models (IGC 2017). Establishing a counselling relationship with students, based on good rapport and informed consent, is a crucial role played by guidance counsellors when providing personal support to students (IGC 2017). In terms of educational and vocational counselling, the DES (2005) suggest activities related to subject choice

awareness, educational programmes information, career exploration and planning and assistance in developing study skills should be implemented in post-primary guidance. The essential aim of educational guidance is to develop career planning skills and establish a self-efficacy in students through the development of career information and exploration (IGC 2017). The IGC (2017) also highlight the intent of vocational guidance as ensuring that students “strengths, interests, aptitudes, abilities, skills and personal factors which influence career decision making” (p. 34) are identified. The role of the guidance counsellor here relates to knowledge of occupations and professions, theories of development and policies regarding lifelong learning. In developing and practicing a holistic model that caters for the personal, educational and vocational needs of all students, guidance counsellors must always adhere to the Code of Ethics (2012) and the Competency Framework (2018) set out by the IGC for professional practice.

Within the post-primary sector, where a guidance counsellor’s role is predominantly with adolescents as they progress through their secondary education, a whole-school approach is recommended. The Indecon Review of Career Guidance (2019) suggests that a whole-school guidance plan ensures a “structured response to the educational, vocational and personal needs of the student” (p.v). This is also echoed by The Department of Education and Skills (DES) in a Circular Letter (0010/2017) that indicates guidance counsellors, and a school as a whole, should outline the approach of “how students can be supported and assisted in making choices and successful transitions in the personal and social, education and career areas” (p.2) of their lives. Guidance in a school’s overall framework is outlined in Section 9(c) of the Education Act (1998) which obliges schools to “ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choice” (p. 13).

2.2 Introduction to Dual Careers

Having outlined the role of a guidance counsellor, a notable curiosity remains as to its relevance in supporting student-athletes. The simultaneous endeavour of educational or vocational achievement and sporting achievement is referred to as a “dual career” in sport psychology literature (Stambulova *et al.*, 2015). This relates to many athletes who continue to compete at an elite level while pursuing their education or career. Herein lies the link. Recognising its prevalence, the European Parliament’s (2016) policy department outlines key recommendations in relation to the standards of dual career programmes and services. The policy advises “a continuous political and financial EU interest and support in dual careers”

(pg. 35), highlighting the importance of a standardised approach to dual careers in all member states. While this can be regarded as macro-level policy, a further review of the Irish, European and worldwide approach to dual careers is needed to develop the potential role of guidance counsellors in supporting dual career (DC) student-athletes.

2.3 European and World Discourse:

A recent state-of-the-art review of DCs across the European discourse (Stambulova & Wylleman 2019) offers an in-depth insight into the most modern and relevant research available. Addressing some older papers and their early relevance, the research looks to *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* as producing two notable milestones. Firstly, an issue on “Career transitions” (Wylleman *et al.*, 2004) which presented a holistic approach across an athlete’s lifespan and introduced that academic and vocational development of an athlete over their lifespan needed to be considered. This holistic approach recognised the importance of congruency between an athlete’s athletic, psychological, social and academic/vocational development. It is suggested by Stambulova & Wylleman (2019) that the introduction of this holistic model “planted the seed” (p.75) for future DC sport psychology research across Europe. This groundwork paved the way for the Holistic Athletic Career (HAC) model (Wylleman *et al.*, 2013), which addresses the multi-dimensional features across an athlete’s DC. The framework looks at the athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational and financial aspects of an athlete’s career and was endorsed in the EU Guidelines on Dual Career of Athletes (European Commission 2012). Secondly, “Dual career development and transitions” (Stambulova & Wylleman 2015) featured eight papers looking at career development and DC pathways, career transitions in schools and universities, and various forms of DC career assistance. The term “dual career” featured in the White Paper on Sport (European Commission 2007), while one of the more prevalent earlier papers was a systematic review of research carried out on European DC between 2007 and 2014 (Guidotti *et al.*, 2015). This review featured 49 papers, two books, three chapters and one report, who all dealt with the promotion of the term dual career and DC as a multidisciplinary topic. Other notable reviews include a meta-synthesis of qualitative research on DC experiences of elite athletes (Li & Sum 2017) and an overview of the legal and social policy issues in relation to EU Guidelines on Dual Careers (Kornback 2017). Looking through these lenses, a greater light can be shone on the role, if any, that a guidance counsellor can play in DC student’s lives. The EU DC Guidelines (2012) highlight the occurrence of athletes’ DCs while attending primary,

secondary and higher-level education. With the concept of holistic models in mind, this again suggests that a DC should be embedded into the lifespan development of an athlete in early childhood as well as early and later adolescence. However, and as outlined by Stambulova & Wylleman (2019), no recent research has been carried out dealing with DC's at primary school level. Subsequently, all relevant research lies with DC students at secondary and higher-level education.

It is also curious that Guidotti and colleagues suggested in 2015 that the four DC dimensions that were identified (i.e. individual, interpersonal, social/organizational and political) were typically studied on an individual basis, concluding that future research should “explore the intertwined relationships between different dimensions of DC” (p.17). So, a conclusion can be drawn that despite the holistic perspective being highlighted in EU Guidelines in 2012, as well as the development of a HAC model (Wylleman *et al.*, 2013), studies still tended to focus on individual DC components up until 2015. This is then echoed by Stambulova & Wylleman (2019) in their review of 42 peer-reviewed publications between 2015 and 2018, revealing that European researchers needed to aim to increase the research and information around DCs from “a whole person” or holistic perspective. There is recent evidence of implementation of this approach in a study of a Danish university and the emphasis placed on the environment created around DC athletes (Henriksen *et al.*, 2020). This study is discussed in more detail in the Dual Career Development Environment section.

2.3.1 DC Pathways and Transitions

The pathways or transitions that student-athletes face, both in education (class attendance, assignment deadlines, exam success) and sport (pressures of training and performance, possible injury, advancement to senior levels) inevitably carry demands and stressors for students. These changes and challenges are interlinked in the psychological, psychosocial and financial elements of an adolescent's life. Studies related to the transitions of 9 British athletes (Brown *et al.*, 2015), 9 French elite male athletes (DeBois *et al.*, 2015) and 5 Slovak elite athletes (Geraniosova & Ronkainen 2015) highlight the inseparable nature of these elements of an athlete's life and the demands they hold. An Asian study of 8 elite national level student-athletes and the social-ecological determinants of an athlete's career development echoes this relevance of the influences between individual, micro, meso, and macro levels of a student-athlete (Sum *et al.*, 2017). Reference to transitions in A Whole School Guidance Framework (NCGE 2017) acknowledges the various transitions for students, but also that “some students may require additional and more intensive support in making transitions” (p. 13).

2.3.2 DC Psychological Domain

In the psychological domain, identity and the forming of competences are prevalent in DC athletes. A study of 760 Italian student-athletes depicted the struggle between athletic and academic identity of students (Lupo *et al.*, 2017). Research of 18 Finnish elite DC athletes recognised the construction of identity and future plans through narratives integrating significant events in relation to both education and sport (Ryba *et al.*, 2017). Considering the academic identity of student-athletes, and its association to dual careers, research reports inconsistent results. A lack of significant association between student-athletes' primary identities (van Rens 2018) contrasts to the negative associations found by Sturm *et al.* (2011) and the positive relationship between academic and athletic identities reported by Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2018). Qualitative research by Ronkainen *et al.* (2018) depicts that identity is heavily influenced by narrative resources that are available to the student-athlete. These resources could include family, friends, role model athletes or their larger cultural context when developing sporting or academic identities. The importance of developing competencies for coping with DC challenges and stressors was highlighted in two quantitative studies of 107 Flemish elite student-athletes (De Brandt *et al.*, 2017) and 243 Polish student-athletes competing in both individual and team sports (Graczyk *et al.*, 2017). These studies, which used typical DC scenarios and the possible competencies needed to overcome these, found that DC management, career planning, mental toughness, social intelligence, and adaptability were the leading competencies detected by DC athletes as being most important. This is mirrored by Cosh & Tully (2015) as they highlight the benefits of upskilling and developing competencies in a study of 20 university student-athletes navigating DCs.

2.3.3 DC Psychosocial Domain

In the psychosocial domain, student-athletes must build, develop and maintain relationships with teammates, coaches, friends, teachers and even their family during their busy pursuit of their DC. Evidence of these challenges is portrayed in a study of 5 Slovak athletes who reported "negative prejudice against athletes" from teachers and other students (Geraniosova & Ronkainen 2015, p. 61). The study of 20 university student-athletes also highlights that relationships with parents and coaches is paramount when dealing with the stressors of combining sport and education (Cosh & Tully 2015). The importance of relationship building is highlighted under the "Developing Myself" section of A Whole School Guidance Framework (NCGE, 2017) in outlining a guidance counsellor's role in helping students to "analyse one's own interaction with peers, teachers & employers & identify behaviour patterns which may be influencing relationships with others" (p. 19).

2.3.4 DC Balance

Inescapably, DC student-athletes face demands from various domains and at different stages. Overcoming these challenges requires extra time and effort on the part of the student-athlete, but inevitably it will lead to the prioritisation of some elements over the others. Depending on whether exam focus, or competition focus is to the fore is obviously dependent on the time or situation of the student-athlete's life. This prioritising is recognised as maintaining a DC balance, something that a DC athlete must become adjusted to and comfortable with along their DC pathway. Stambulova *et al.* longitudinal study (2015) of 261 Swedish sixteen-year-old athletes had student-athletes reporting that it was impossible to always give 100% in sport and studies, therefore they appreciated the need of finding an optimal DC balance. Those student-athletes that were successful in finding the balance between achieving both educational and athletic goals noted that they were able to “live satisfying private lives and maintain their health and wellbeing” (p. 12). Research carried out on 19 current and former Australian high-performance athletes, over a range of sports, recognises the struggle in balancing school and sporting lives. Using the framework of representing student-athletes as hyphenated individuals (Fine & Sirin 2007), the study calls for a heightened awareness around the demands and challenges of balancing a DC (O'Neill *et al.*, 2013). Many external factors, or barriers, can also have a telling impact on this balancing act of a DC student-athlete. Stressors imposed by an organisation (Kristiansen 2017), or the lack of DC support within a program (Fuchs *et al.*, 2016) are often combined with certain internal factors concerning the student-athletes. The construction and validation of a Sport Burnout Inventory-DC form by Sorkkila *et al.* in 2017 confirmed that burnout correlated with depressive symptoms and low self-esteem in athletes. A quantitative study of 373 Finnish DC athletes further confirmed this link by showing that school burnout at the beginning of the year predicts sport burnout by the end of the year (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2018).

2.3.5 DC Motivations

DC student-athlete's motivations must also be considered as important internal factors. High identified motives in both the sporting and educational domains suggest a greater determination in balancing the facilitation of both pursuits in 204 British student-athletes (Healy *et al.*, 2016). Patterns in a quantitative study of over 300 Finnish DC athletes highlights the dynamics of low academic but high athletic motivations, and vice versa, as strong predictors of student's future career aspirations in either sport or education (Aunola *et al.*, 2018). Interestingly, as outlined by Stambulova & Wylleman (2019), motivation with “sport as a passion and education as a need is usually associated with athletic identity dominating over academic and other identity

dimensions” (p. 84). In the context of the development stages of adolescent athletes, this is important to consider when being aware of the risk of identity foreclosure, or more appropriately, athletic identity foreclosure (Brewer & Petitpas 2017). Related to this, an insightful take on the attractiveness of such an athletic identity is offered in Pavlidis and Gargalianos review paper (2014) as the authors explain “in the current sporting context, success brings immediate gratification”, as “superstar athletes” are followed as role models and idolised (p.295). They also suggest that “well-educated athletes get limited (if any) appraisal or public recognition” while the “benefits derived from education are usually distant” (p. 295).

The healthy lifestyle and wellbeing of DC student-athletes has been an element of many DC related papers, with topics like recovery, sleep and diet being part of a larger study (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2017; Sallen *et al.*, 2018; Li & Sum 2017; Sorkkila *et al.*, 2018). Inevitably, the lack of wellbeing factors in a DC lead to the risk of burnout or dropout. The quantitative research carried out on 391 Finnish DC athletes between the ages of 15 and 16 years old recognised that high expectations from both athletes and parents, in either the educational or sporting domain, ultimately led to burnout symptoms in the opposite domain (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2017). Notably, Sorkkila *et al.* (2018) study on burnout highlighted that the use of mastery goals in both sporting and educational domains acted as a protective factor to a student-athletes wellbeing, reducing the risk of burnout and dropout. As expressed by Stambulova & Wylleman (2019), these studies have simply begun the research of this crucial area of importance, with the need for specific studies carried out in relation to the lifestyle and wellbeing of DC athletes in preventing burnout or dropout.

2.4 Irish Discourse

Having looked at the far-reaching research undertaken across Europe and the wider world, it is important to also shed a light on the Irish approach and perspectives of DCs. From a research point of view, no studies have been carried out specifically related to DCs. No research has used the term DC or suggested its impact or influence on topics such as DC pathways, DC demands, DC personal resources/competences, DC support networks, DC environments or DC coping strategies. In comparison to the extensive work carried out in Europe in relation to these topics, Ireland’s lack of relevant research is notable. The Irish Government’s Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport released a National Sports Policy 2018-2027 (DTTAS 2018) outlining 57 actions to be taken across all sports in hopes of setting a vision of Irish sport. When addressing an approach to sport in primary, post-primary and third level education the policy

outlined initiatives dealing with the participation in sport at all these levels. It also highlights the need to provide education and information to parents and guardians of athletes’ “physical literacy and positive habits around sport” (p. 29). Following Action 24 (p.57) of the policy, a High-Performance Strategy 2020-2027 (Sport Ireland, 2020) for sport in Ireland was also developed, outlining ambitious initiatives that can develop the approach to high performance sports planning. A Student Activity and Sports Study (Murphy *et al.*, 2016) and The Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (Woods *et al.*, 2018) carried out by Sport Ireland, both outlined the importance and benefits of participation in sport and physical activity, with the latter study looking at children ranging from age 10 – 18. Curiously, while all these policies and studies address the importance of sport participation and the approaches needed to implement success, none of the above documents use the term “dual career”. The relevance of providing support and assistance to athletes combining sport and education is outlined, but not using DC terminology. Sport Ireland Institute dedicates a section of its website to “Education Support” and acknowledges the challenges faced by students in the many possible stages of education in their lives, both post-primary and third level. It endorses the use of supports and assistance on offer while also recommending a self-manage approach to athletes’ careers. It also advertises their developed links with universities and third level institutes and the benefits this provides to athletes in helping to develop high performance and education plans with student-athletes. Interestingly, there is no reference to any such supports provided at post-primary level education. Essentially, the non-existent research of DC in an Irish context can perhaps be linked to the lack of recognition of the term in national educational and sporting policies, studies and strategies.

2.5 Dual Career Development Environments

Having considered the focus on student-athletes as individuals and the variety of challenges that they may face, contemporary DC research suggests just one side of the story. This is identified by Stambulova and Wylleman (2019) as they highlight a gap in European discourse in the lack of understanding of “a whole environment” for DC athletes (p. 84). They also express a hope that the European “Ecology of DC” (ECO-DC 2018) project will be able to bridge this gap through highlighting the use of the Dual Career Development Environment (DCDE) Model (Henriksen *et al.*, 2020) and the Holistic Ecological Approach (Henriksen *et al.*, 2010). The ECO-DC project initiated looking beyond the individual student-athlete and instead putting a focus on the DCDE the student-athletes are a part of. The DCDE model was

used in a study of a Danish athlete-friendly university, concluding that the culture of the environment was to not only focus on the individual challenges and coping strategies but to take a wider look at optimizing the entire environment around the student-athletes (Henriksen *et al.*, 2020). This project and continuing research suggest a newer focus on the environments that DC athletes are enrolled in and the influence this can have in assisting and guiding the DC student-athletes through the many individual challenges that they face. In an Irish context, and relevant to adolescent student-athletes in post-primary education, this emerging trend in DC literature proposes that “sports-friendly schools” can opt to develop themselves into DCDE which utilise an Holistic Ecological Approach (Henriksen *et al.*, 2010). Outside of Europe, Ryan (2015) voiced the need for career assistance programmes that actively support and encourage athletes, when he studied the readiness of 17 carded DC athletes in New Zealand. This may explain his research in 2017 to examine the effectiveness of an Athlete Friendly Tertiary Network policy in New Zealand. This investigation reported that one of the main difficulties faced was a lack of awareness from front line teaching staff within the student-athletes’ environment (Ryan *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, an O’Neill *et al.* interview study of 19 Australian student-athletes led to recommendations for schools to “give voice to student-athletes”, rather than “ignoring or playing down” the challenges faced by talented school-age athletes (2013).

Numerous studies both in Europe and worldwide reflect on the notion that instead of simply acting as a protective scaffold or in a controlling manner towards the student-athlete, their environment must recognise and consider its role in developing an autonomous and highly responsible DC student-athlete (Brown *et al.*, 2015; Stambulova *et al.*, 2015; Ryan *et al.*, 2017; Sorkkila *et al.*, 2018). As shown specifically in Knight *et al.*, (2018) study of the role of social support networks of 8 elite British DC athletes, the importance of the DC support environment’s member’s in anticipating problems, suggesting solutions and minimising DC barriers was paramount to demonstrating a belief in DC support. A DC competency framework, developed as part of the EU funded “Gold in Education and Elite Sport” (GEES, 2016) perhaps represents the gold-standard of the competences needed for both DC student-athletes and also DC development environments. In addition to addressing the crucial student-athlete DC competences (DeBrandt *et al.*, 2017), the GEES researchers highlighted the necessary DCDE competences required when facilitating and nurturing a DC student-athlete. By implementing reflection and self-management, advocacy and dissemination, organisational, empowerment,

and relationship competences, DCDE's could strive to support DC athletes in the most effective ways (GEES 2016).

2.6 Conclusion

Literature outlines the need for guidance counsellors to recognise their individual role, as well as a whole-school role, in assisting and supporting students holistically. This refers to the personal, social, educational and vocational needs of all students. Analysis of international research carried out on student-athletes and the multi-dimensional nature of DCs seems to offer itself well to these student-athlete needs. In appreciating Wylleman *et al.* development of The HAC model (2013), a variety of additional research has recognised the “need to better understand the risk and resilience factors related to the construction of dual careers during critical transitions of adolescent athletes” (Ryba *et al.*, 2016. p. 11). The link between the role of guidance counsellors and the holistic approach needed in assisting and guiding DC student-athletes through critical transitions in their lives is clear. It is perhaps captured best in a Slovenian study looking at prioritising dual careers in student-athletes, voicing the need to “protect the right to combine sport and education” (Capranica *et al.*, 2015. p. 5).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The methodology chapter considers the practical approaches and the philosophical viewpoints of the research project. Firstly, the research questions are addressed and established. A rationale for the chosen research paradigm then follows, as the researcher considers the fitness for purpose of the appropriate paradigm for the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Thirdly, the research methodology is examined in relation to the sampling, data collection and data analysis to be used. As expressed by Blaxter *et al.* (2010), the research “should be as open and transparent as possible” (p.16) in relation to the methodologies used and the reliability, validity and reflexivity of the research. Finally, the ethical issues and considerations involved in the research study will be addressed.

3.1 Identification of Research Questions

In considering a path of research, Thomas (2017) offers that “a piece of research is built around a question, not a method” (p.43). The research questions for this study were derived from literature, policy development and possible gaps identified in research. The research questions in this study are linked to the complex role of the guidance counsellor, outlined in the literature review, in assisting dual career student-athletes in their school.

3.1.1 Primary Question

The aim of this research study is to explore the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student athletes that attend their post-primary school. The primary question is: *What is the role of the guidance counsellor when supporting dual career student-athletes?*

3.1.2 Secondary Questions

The secondary questions which arise from the aim and objectives of the study and underpin the research are as follows:

1. What are guidance counsellors’ perceptions of their role in supporting dual career student athletes?
2. What supports can guidance counsellors put in place to allow dual career student athletes to progress successfully in both domains.
3. Do guidance counsellors have the knowledge and training to support dual career student athletes?
4. In what way do schools support student athletes in successfully navigating dual career status?

3.2 Research Paradigm

3.2.1 Research Frame of Study

The research aim, to explore the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student athletes, can present certain barriers to student's progression in both sport and academia. As highlighted, there is a notable absence in current Irish literature looking at the term dual career, particularly in post-primary schools. This absence is evident across all relevant sporting literature and missing from all guiding documents in the practice and policy of guidance counselling in an Irish context. These facts, coupled with the idea that no two guidance counsellors, or no two schools, are alike, raise the question as to the most effective methodologies to apply to the study. A deductive approach can provide an opportunity to gather data in relation to the various roles and methods of guidance counsellors, while an inductive approach can provide a richness in narrative in looking at the experiences and perceptions of guidance counsellors in practice.

3.2.2 Researchers' 'Worldviews'

In contemplating how the researchers own personal beliefs, values and attitudes, and position in the field, may play a part in this study, a thorough look is given to the involvement that the researcher has with sport and student athletes (Dean 2017). The researcher plays sport at a highly competitive level, with this commitment resulting in the researcher being a student-athlete throughout their second and third level education and subsequent career. The researcher also currently works with, and coaches' teams which have dual career student-athletes. As outlined by Creswell & Plano Clarke (2011), "researchers bring to their enquiry a worldview composed of beliefs and assumptions about knowledge that informs their study" (p. 39). The underlying ontological and epistemological views of a researcher contribute to their paradigm (Burton *et al.*, 2008).

This researcher believes the ontological view that it is through our experiences of reality in which we create an "ever-changing" (Burton *et al.*, 2008) existence. This belief is founded from experience in both the educational and sporting sectors and the observation of individuals creating their own differing realities. Despite competing on the same teams or working in the same geographical locations, individuals are part of various socioeconomic backgrounds and create differing life experiences. This epistemological outlook also recognises that "knowledge is constructed from multiple perspectives" (Burton *et al.*, 2008, p.62), which leaves the interpretation and use of this knowledge up to the individual themselves. This suggests that taking this view understands that our social world is "constructed by each of us in a different

way” (Thomas 2017, p.110). Recognising the incoherent literature framing the aims of this study and understanding the ontological and epistemological views of the researcher, it became clear that an interpretivist view would be most appropriate in guiding this study.

3.2.3 Choosing a paradigm

While the researcher’s awareness of their interpretivist view is critical, due attention was given to the methodologies needed in formulating a credible and trustworthy study. Proposed by Moran *et al.* (2011), mixed methods research has “much to offer sport and exercise psychology researchers” (p.367). The benefits of a mixed methods approach, including offsetting weaknesses and providing stronger inferences, triangulation, hypothesis development, and enhancing generalisation were considered (Doyle *et al.*, 2009; Hesse-Beber 2010; Horn 2011; Moran *et al.*, 2011). This consideration of a mixed methods approach was a result of the strong connection that the researcher has with the frame of study. The epistemological view of the researcher suggests that a phenomenological study of participants will uncover rich patterns among their lived experiences. The close connection to research also ensured the researcher recognised the possible benefits of an objective epistemology, where the idea of obtaining knowledge objectively could be practiced (Thomas 2017).

However, with the aim of my research to explore the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student athletes, the researcher looked to uncover insights into the experiences and perceptions of individual guidance counsellors in their school settings. Due to the very personal interpretations of their role in differing cases, a subjective outlook on their experiences is needed. Therefore, the objective and empirical data gathered through quantitative research would deem less effective in this study.

3.2.4 Rationale for selecting qualitative approach

Aiming to interact with the participants of the research encourages an insider effect for the interpretivist researcher (Thomas 2017). This approach will act to frame the research to allow the freedom to investigate the perceived roles of various guidance counsellors. Their knowledge and interpretation of dual career student-athletes, as well as their view on the support offered within their settings will also be possible. A qualitative study looks to uncover and seek to understand the perceptions of people and their experiences (Bell 2010). Qualitative methodology offers “a depth rather than a breadth” (Basit 2010, p.16) in gaining a better understanding of the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student athletes, and so, was selected for this research.

3.3 Research Design:

3.3.1 Access and Sampling Strategy

Ensuring that applicable participants are selected for the research contributes to representative findings (Flick 2011). The sample consisted of all guidance counsellors who were members of the local IGC branch in the West of Ireland, working in post-primary education. The study comprised of candidates from both genders. Access was granted to the members of the IGC branch through contacting the chairperson, who acted as gatekeepers in forwarding all relevant information sheets (Appendix A), consent forms (Appendix B) and research privacy notices (Appendix C) to branch members. Noting the time constraints of the research study, participants who volunteered for the study were selected on a first come first serve basis (Thomas 2017). The following table displays the demographic information gathered from the sample.

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Guidance Experience	Type of School	Played sport as a post-primary student?	Individual/Team sport?	Elite Level?	Length of Interview
Mary	F	9	Co-Ed Community School	No	N/A	N/A	25mins
Patrick	M	17	All Boys Voluntary Secondary School	Yes	Team	No	28mins
Imelda	F	20	Co-Ed Community School	Yes	Both	International Level	38mins
Jacinta	F	15	Co-Ed Vocational School	Yes	Individual	National Level	38mins
Philomena	F	9	Co-Ed Vocational School	Yes	Individual	National Level	31mins
Kate	F	16	Co-Ed Vocational School	Yes	Individual	No	26mins
Emma	F	19	Co-Ed Community School	Yes	Team	No	36mins

Table 3.1 Participant Demographic Information

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The method of data collection practiced in this study was semi-structured interviews with qualified guidance counsellors between March – April 2020. The framework of the interview presented a section of demographic questions followed by a sequence of predetermined interview questions. In comparison to a structured method of interview, a semi-structure method was chosen to allow the researcher an open-ended provision to ask extra or follow-up questions where relevant. These questions allow for reference to existing literature or previous experiences of the researcher, in addition to allowing for more expression on feelings or experiences from the participants (Thomas 2017). This semi-structured format also allowed the researcher a flexibility during individual interviews to interject, explore, or clarify various inputs that the participant may be making.

In recognising and acknowledging the lack of inclusion of the term dual career in Irish guidelines for practice, strategies and policies, the researcher opted to include prompt cards to the interview process (Appendix F; G; H). ‘Prompt cards’ or ‘concept cards’ are used in qualitative research to help elicit linkages between key topics (Sutton 2011). Prompt card 1 was used to define and explain the term dual career to participants (Appendix F). Prompt card 2 offered insights into research carried out on the competences of dual career student-athletes (Appendix G). Prompt card 3 offered insights into the competences of dual career support providers that offer support and assistance to dual career student-athletes (Appendix H).

The researcher’s decision to use a semi-structured method to interview proved crucial in obtaining data due to all interviews being carried out using Skype for Business. While initial plans included carrying out face-to-face interviews with participants, this no longer became possible because of health and safety constraints at the time of research. Due to a world health pandemic, no one-to-one interactions were prohibited and so the researcher looked to internet-based methods of communication for gathering data. As highlighted by Lolacona *et al.* (2016), although replacing face-to-face interviews cannot be completely replaced, Skype interviews “work well as a viable alternative or complimentary data collection tool for qualitative researchers” (p.1). The selection of Skype for Business offered the enhanced high-level security authentication that the platform provides, in addition to the recording feature that was used to record the audio data, allowing for transcription later. All participants had consented to the recording of interviews, however the researcher ensured to give further notification of this at the beginning of each interview on Skype for Business.

Appreciating the different interviewing format, the researcher acknowledged Bell's (2010) opinion that the piloting of an interview can prove paramount in ensuring rigour to the process. The piloting interview was carried out with a qualified guidance counsellor in March 2020 and proved to be extremely beneficial in the effective use of prompt cards during the interview, but also using these through the online medium of Skype for Business. Majid *et al.* (2017) expressed that while pilot studies are more commonly used in quantitative research, the testing of questions and gaining practice of interviewing is also highly applicable to the qualitative paradigm. The pilot highlighted the effectiveness of using a shared screen with the participant when using the prompt cards, while also shedding light on how valuable the questions were in extracting data that was relevant to the aims and objectives of the research. Some questions were deemed too broad by the pilot participant and so a number of small adjustments were made to four questions following this feedback. An appreciation of the length and timing of the interview was also gained, something the researcher valued as important in ensuring that enough questions were being asked to accumulate data, but not too many that the participant may become disinterested (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

Following the pilot interview, the researcher acknowledged the importance of the development of a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (McLeod 2015) but recognised the challenge of achieving this through the medium of Skype. As a result, the researcher employed the use of core skills of counselling to each interview. With each participant, it deemed crucial to ensure active listening, empathy, positive affirmations, and congruence throughout the interviews (Nelson-Jones 2014). The researcher was also cognisant of the possibility of factors such as reactivity from participants when using Skype (Hearne *et al.*, 2016). This behaviour, which sees participants limiting responses, withholding information, or providing responses that they believe the researcher wants to hear, may be more applicable to interviews carried out on internet-based methods of communication.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The audio recordings from the Skype interviews were used to transcribe all interviews verbatim. The audio and written research data was checked by the researcher and then each transcribed interview was sent back to the participant via email for member checking. The process of member checking ensures trustworthiness and credibility in data collection (Birt *et al.*, 2016). Only one participant requested a small change to the original transcript. Once all transcripts were checked and sent back to the researcher, this ensured that the first phase, familiarisation with the data, of the six phases of thematic data analysis outlined by Clarke and

Braun (2006) was carried out by the researcher. Applying this form of analysis was deemed appropriate due to the openness of the participants in sharing their perceptions and experiences in the context of the research question. In drawing themes from these responses, thematic analysis is “a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick and unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.81). This analysis exercised Braun and Clarke’s (2006) view that data cannot be projected onto any existing preconceptions or theories of the researcher. Instead, the interpretivist approach of “building a framework of multiple realities” (Thomas 2017, p.114) was adapted. A coding system, applied through adding comments to transcripts in Google Docs, was then adapted. Initially, one hundred and seventeen various codes were identified by the researcher across the seven interview transcripts. These codes were then assessed and placed under relevant sub-headings that were subsequently used to identify themes that had formed across the data (Appendix J). These steps fulfilled phases two-five of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis and resulted in reducing the large amount of available data into broader, more workable, themes (Thomas 2017). The following image displays the coding process followed when analysing the findings.

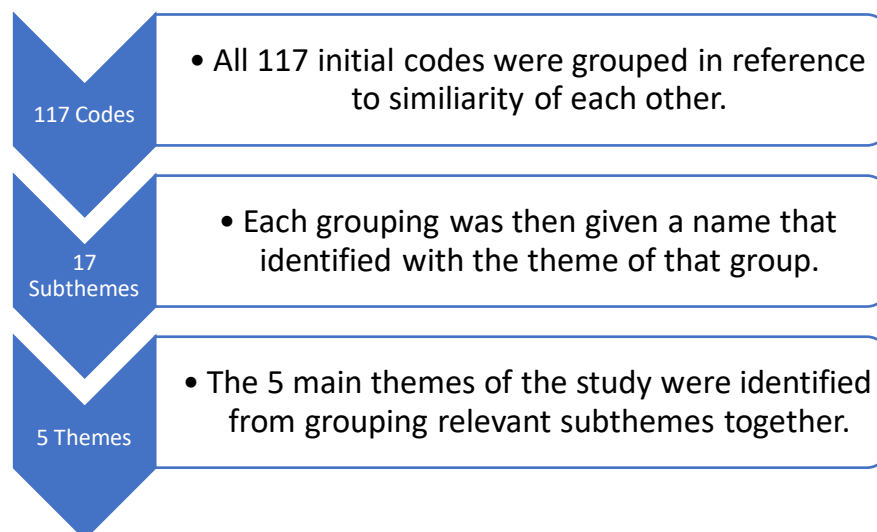


Fig. 3.2 Sequence of Coding Process

3.4 Reflexivity

As expressed previously, the researcher played due attention to their involvement in a dual career throughout their education, as well as their current work with adolescent student-

athletes. The researcher was also aware of their position as a trainee guidance counsellor and the possible bias that this may infer when researching the roles and perceptions of practicing guidance counsellors with student-athletes. In attempting to reduce bias or skewedness in the research, the researcher systematically attended to the context in which all knowledge of the study is delivered and gathered. Whether in the questions asked, or the interpretation of answers, “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation” (Berger 2015, p.220) of the researcher’s involvement in the domains of the study was a constant attempt to lower subjectivity throughout the study.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity of the study is well portrayed as “a process whereby the researcher earns the confidence of the reader that he or she has ‘gotten it right’, and trustworthiness takes the place of truth” (Hesser-Biber & Leavy 2011, p.48). In establishing validity, the use of member checking, where data is returned to participants to check for accuracy, was used in the outset of data analysis (Birt *et al.*, 2016). Considering reflexive practice throughout the study, the researcher continued to acknowledge the impact that their experience as a student-athlete and trainee guidance counsellor might be having. In recording a reflective journal, using ‘O’Driscoll’s “What” Model’, detailed by Bassot (2016), as a framework for reflective practice, the researcher aimed to create a validation of trustworthiness in the study. This reflective journal proved to highlight, and act to help nullify, any biases that arose during the study. The researcher came across some examples of this when empathising with guidance counsellors in relation to the challenges of time constraints and lack of knowledge of dual careers. Additionally, towards the student-athletes that attend the schools of guidance counsellors who seemed to be less receptive to supporting dual career student-athletes. The reflective journal acted as a valuable aid in distinguishing the potency of these biases at various stages.

Bell describes reliability as the extent to which a test or procedure records similar results under constant conditions on numerous occasions (2005). In acknowledgement of biases and perceptions of data, the researchers reflective journal (Appendix K) also offers a more reliable conclusion of experiences recorded (Bassot 2016). The reliability of the interview questions and structure were exercised in the pilot interview undertaken with a qualified guidance counsellor before the carrying out of the research study interviews. This pilot interview acted as a guide to the reliability of practice of using prompt cards within the Skype for Business

setting of the interviews. A consistent framework of interview was utilised with each individual participant, and the researcher actively probed and explored answers and stories of participants to ensure a clarity and accuracy of data was obtained (Hearne *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, throughout this study, the researcher and research supervisor remained in continual supervisory contact

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Outlined by Robson and McCartan (2016), the researcher must be cognisant of the ethical practices that guide the conduct of different situations within the research. In thriving to uphold ethical research, the ‘four layers of knowledge’¹ expressed by McLeod (2015) dictate strategies put in place throughout the research. Strict adherence of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC 2012) code of ethical guidelines for standards of best practice was followed in this study. With the research focused on qualified guidance counsellors, the awareness of all participants of this Code of Ethics supplied an extra layer of consideration in relation to the disclosure of names, locations, or personal details within their shared experiences. In practicing as an ethical researcher for this study, the underpinning of respect, responsibility and integrity, as outlined by the National Centre for Guidance and Education (NCGE 2008) *Research Code of Ethics*, were acted upon throughout the study.

The research study received ethical approval from the EHSRS of the University of Limerick in January 2020 (Appendix D). An explanation of the nature of the study was provided to all participants, as information sheets (Appendix A), consent forms (Appendix B), and research privacy notices (Appendix C) were provided to all gatekeepers and participants. Once contact was made between consenting participants and the researcher, consideration of the use of Skype for Business was discussed and assurance was provided that all ethical guidelines in relation to data storage and recording of the interview would still be strenuously adhered to.

This research study has the potential of introducing new terms and research to the participants, based on the lack of current Irish literature discussed. It is envisioned that the insights gained into the role of guidance counsellors in supporting dual career student-athletes will provide

¹ 1. Understanding of basic ethical principles. 2. Routine procedures in the research design for implementing ethical principles. 3. Strategies for responding to ethical dilemmas in the research study. 4. Strategies for dealing with ethical issues for sensitive topics and different types of participants.

benefits that will balance positively against any personal costs, such as time consumption, of the individuals involved (Hearne 2013).

3.7 Conclusion

The methodology chapter has considered the practical approaches and the philosophical viewpoints of the research project. It firstly looked at the research questions, followed by a rationale for the chosen research paradigm, as the researcher considered the fitness for purpose of the appropriate paradigm for the study. Thirdly, the research methodology is examined the sampling, data collection and data analysis to be used. The openness and transparency of the was expressed through insights related to the methodologies used, the reliability, the validity, and the reflexivity of the research. Finally, the ethical issues and considerations involved in the research study were addressed.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

Throughout the seven interviews, guidance counsellors highlighted their knowledge, experience, and attitudes towards supporting dual career student-athletes in their school. In analysing this data, five main themes and subsequent subthemes were identified. These themes and subthemes reflect the complex nature of the role of the guidance counsellor in relation to: their knowledge and training of dual careers, the opportunities that a dual career can offer, the challenges that student-athletes face, and the role of the whole school in supporting dual career student-athletes.

4.1 Guidance Counsellors' level of confidence in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Six respondents expressed their confidence in providing support to dual career student-athletes. Three respondents offered a high note of confidence, *"Oh absolutely I'd feel confident"* (Mary), and three respondents felt confident but also *"feel the need for more information on it"* (Emma). Two respondents highlighted that meeting a student-athlete would be *"the same as with every student"* (Patrick) and that *"we're trained to listen and use our counselling skills so I think any of us can do it"* (Imelda). One respondent declared that they *"wouldn't say they feel confident"* but *"certainly would do my best"* (Kate) when working with dual career student-athletes. Five respondents who had not heard of the term dual career indicated that they would feel confident in supporting dual career student-athletes in the school setting. Five respondents expressed the need for CPD to help develop understanding of dual careers, the challenges they present, and the appropriate supports.

4.1.1 Limited knowledge of the term dual career.

Five respondents indicated that they had no previous knowledge of the term dual career. One respondent felt they had *"heard it before but have never really attached it to sport"* (Mary), while one other respondent, Imelda, had heard of the term during experience with dual career athletes outside of the school setting. When questioned on their opinions of the term dual career, two respondents felt that the term was misleading when related to sport and education:

"A bit misleading as large majority are unlikely to earn a wage from one of the careers, especially the sporting one. But I can see the benefits of labelling it and I think the relevant students would likely appreciate the term". (Patrick)

“My initial thoughts when I hear the term dual career is somebody who is managing two professions. I suppose even amateur athletes who are involved in sport, the commitment they put in is often not far off that of a professional athlete so, I think the term may be a little bit misleading”. (Philomena)

Although citing that the term dual career makes sense to her, Jacinta highlighted her lack of understanding by declaring that devotion to a career must be sacrificed for commitment to a sport:

“It makes sense to me. I think it’s important because if you want to play a sport to an elite level you can’t give your career the same devotion as you can to your sport” (Jacinta)

4.1.2 The benefits that CPD could offer.

Four respondents would welcome further education and information in relation to dual careers and supporting dual career student-athletes. Kate indicates that *“I think that’s very relevant and I would attend any training”*, while Emma highlights that *“I definitely feel that I need more information on it”*. The benefits of CPD for guidance counsellors, as well as other school personnel is recognised:

“I think there’s a role for guidance counsellors and a role for senior management figures in the school if we were educated. We’re not educated on it so we’re ignorant to it”. (Kate)

“I suppose if we had more knowledge or information about how we can support them we could facilitate the young person to deal with these pressures and to really prioritise their own self-care and what’s important for them this week or this month”. (Mary)

Two respondents indicated that CPD would not be a necessity in supporting dual career student-athletes, but further information would be beneficial. This related to the external influences of dual careers, such as sport scholarships or performance points in conjunction with CAO offers for college places:

“Well I think one of the things that I find a little bit more difficult when working with a student-athlete is navigating the scholarship opportunities within colleges with them, because every college offers sports scholarships but they are all in different categories and they all have different application forms with different criteria”. (Philomena)

One respondent highlights the role that passion might play in a guidance counsellors support of dual career student-athletes. With the suggestion of CPD, Jacinta expressed that

“guidance counsellors would only become interested in learning this if they had a passion in it, so if they don’t have a passion or an interest in sport, then I don’t think that that’s going to work”. (Jacinta)

Questioning Jacinta further in relation to the inconsistent approach given to student-athletes if only Guidance Counsellors with a passion for sport provided support, she suggested CPD would provide professional benefits regardless of having an interest in sport:

“I’m not that into sport but I’d like to do it. I think professionally as a guidance counsellor it’s more holistic and psychological and I think you need to understand the level and the time of sport and the perseverance to overcome that mentality”. (Jacinta)

4.2 Participation in sport has an influence on career decision making.

All seven participants suggested that a student’s involvement in sport has an influence on their future choices. The extent of influence is often down to the individual’s level of involvement in sport, guiding a student’s choice of college or college course depending on their own goals and ambitions. The impact that external influences such as scholarships or the opportunities that sport-based careers offer are also considered by participants. The findings related to this theme depict that Guidance Counsellors feel that sports-based careers are best suited to student-athletes. However, if such careers are not possible, sacrifices in either academics or sport must be made by the individual student-athlete.

4.2.1 Guidance Counsellor experience with future career decision making and dual career athletes.

Four respondents outline the connection between a student’s involvement in sport and their future career decisions. Two participants suggested that *“students who are heavily involved in sport will always look into a career in sport”*(Emma), with student-athletes being *“inclined to look at careers in PE teaching, or maybe looking at courses in Sports Science or Physiotherapy”*(Mary). Kate indicates that participating in a *“high level of sport”* will have an impact on their future decisions, while Jacinta explains that if this *“is one of their ambitions, then [she will] definitely tailor the career course to help combine both”*. Jacinta and Kate also explain that they have experienced participation in sport influencing the possible college, college course, and college location student-athletes consider:

“sometimes they would pick certain courses with lower points just so they get into a certain college and even pick their ability to obtain a possible scholarship over the actual content or interest in a course”. (Kate)

“they’re definitely looking at master’s courses or careers that will allow them the time to devote to their sport and course”. (Jacinta)

Philomena indicates the personal decision that it offers to many students:

“I think it’s on an individual basis. Some students who take part in sport it wouldn’t influence their career decision at all, but there are definitely students who make their decisions before college or future careers based on whether they can blend that course or career with their career in sport”. (Philomena)

Three respondents highlight that the influence depends on the individual prospects of scholarships or is reconsidered after further research into certain careers. Imelda offered that *“not always, but a lot of the time it can be a significant influence”*, and explained that having had nine students looking for sports scholarships in the previous year, the scholarships were

“not a deciding factor for a lot of them but it was still a significant influence and a great attraction”. (Imelda)

These insights indicate an expectancy in guidance counsellors that student-athletes will pursue sports-based careers and also their acceptance of student-athletes choosing colleges, college courses, or scholarships that enable a better focus on their sporting careers.

4.3 The challenges of student-athletes balancing academic and athletic lives.

All seven respondents recognised challenges that face student-athletes. This data highlights that despite the limited knowledge of dual careers, guidance counsellors recognise and understand the various challenges of balancing both sport and education. Participants acknowledge the pressures placed on individual student-athletes, which are rooted in the pressures of performance in both domains. This is added to by external pressures from teachers, coaches, teammates, friends, and family. Three respondents highlighted the personal responsibility that a student-athlete holds as being an important aspect in finding this balance.

4.3.1 Balancing a busy sporting life with education.

All seven respondents acknowledged the challenges that student-athletes face, both at an elite level and the amateur level typical of adolescent sports. Three respondents had particular

experience of dealing with students who are faced with the challenges of balancing training and matches and academic commitments, and the pressures this can place on students. External pressures from teams and coaches is indicated by Philomena:

“depending on the timing or frequency of their training and competition, students then feel a pressure to attend all training sessions and matches”, (Philomena)

while Mary outlines that:

“one of the biggest skills that they need to learn is how to prioritise what needs to be done today and accept and live with the fact that they can’t please everyone all of the time, which includes their teachers, their parents and their sports coaches”. (Mary)

Imelda describes the challenges of students in specific sports encountering external challenges with training and performance pressure, but a school being unaware, when voicing that

“many teachers are not aware of the detail. You could have swimmers doing six sessions in a pool and two gyms sessions a week”. (Imelda)

These external pressures are then reflected in pressures at school as Emma explained that a student *“might come in and tell you that they can’t cope because of training and maybe having too much on”*. This may even result in students considering repeating a particular year of study to concentrate on either their study or their sport:

“Sometimes it even came down to wondering about whether they should repeat 5th year because it would give them a chance to focus on school the following year and give them the best shot at the sports side of things”. (Mary)

“Some students, in their Leaving Cert year, might decide to put their studies first and then they find themselves being dropped from a team, which again puts some extra pressure on an individual”. (Philomena)

4.3.2 The individual role of the student-athlete.

In recognising the challenges that student-athletes may face in navigating a dual career, three respondents indicated that student-athletes must take responsibility themselves when faced with these challenges. Mary suggested the proactive approach *“of a student writing a letter to their teachers at the beginning of the academic year”* to notify them of external commitments they have during the year. In navigating a dual career, Jacinta acknowledged how a student *“had a lot of research done and it was great”*, while Philomena expressed that:

“I don’t think it’s my job to judge a student athlete who might be picking a college course because of their sport, if that’s what they want it’s absolutely their choice”

(Philomena)

Philomena also outlined her view that while

“I admire their commitment, discipline and work ethic, because they’re not getting a financial award or anything apart from their personal gain”,

(Philomena)

she feels that the student must exercise their own responsibility when navigating the challenges of a dual career:

“so those students speak to their teachers on an individual level before they go on a training camp and ask their teachers for work”.

(Philomena)

“to me, that’s the student’s responsibility and I would see it as their responsibility to manage their time effectively so that they can meet assignment deadlines”.

(Philomena)

4.4 The professional role of Guidance Counsellors when supporting student-athletes.

All seven respondents have supported student-athletes in their school while Imelda also has experience with student-athletes outside of the school setting. The support offered to students related to both personal counselling support and career guidance support, depending on the individual needs of the student-athlete. When addressing additional methods of support a contrasting view was held in relation to the role that the guidance counsellor could, or should, play when supporting dual career student-athletes. Supports such as tailored timetables, supportive plans, and surveying of student-athletes were viewed as appropriate. However, the debate related to the level of support that a guidance counsellor should offer student-athletes rested with the issue of fairness in supporting all students equally in a school setting. The benefits of a collaborative approach are also recognised, with the challenges of time and data protection being issues highlighted by participants.

4.4.1 The level of support offered to dual career student-athletes.

Mary offers a comprehensive but conflicting view in that she understands her role

“to help them facilitate their balance between school and sport and helping them with study plans, time management and maybe connecting them with colleges that I know provide scholarships in the form of CAO points”, (Mary)

while also intervening at certain times *“when there might be a bit of pressure on them sports-wise”* (Mary). However, she indicates *“that some guidance counsellors would feel that they are already overburdened”* (Mary) when it comes to offering this level of support. Kate also describes a role of *“encouragement and connecting in with them”* in addition to *“being part of the pastoral care committee to voice that link because sometimes it can get lost in the system”*. Imelda and Jacinta describe an enthusiastic and hands-on approach when supporting student-athletes, emphasising the need to sit and plan with the students and outline with them all opportunities and challenges involved:

“Absolutely, it’s to completely encourage it and to work on time plans because their bodies won’t be able for the sport at that level forever, it’s short lived. So, it would be to bring that into their awareness and let them know it’s a great opportunity to run with the sport as well as accommodate study”. (Imelda)

“To look at their plan, or maybe to help develop a supportive plan so that they can achieve the dual career. To highlight what are the blocks in achieving the plan, or the most common pitfalls. To implement strategies so that we can tailor that as opposed to hitting a wall” (Jacinta).

In addition to this, Jacinta goes on to suggest that *“guidance counsellors should probably do an extra course”* to enable them to support student-athletes in the best way possible.

4.4.2 Schools should provide equal support to all students.

Contrasting the views expressed previously, Patrick and Philomena outline that even though guidance counsellors are in position to support dual career student-athletes, their role does not change in the level of support offered and should resemble the support offered to all students in the school:

“A guidance counsellor would be involved in helping the student to manage time effectively in creating personal study plans, but that would be done for any student who are struggling to manage their time”. (Philomena)

“I think the guidance counsellor should help each student, athlete or not, as best they can”. (Patrick)

Mary highlights that a sense of fairness is important in approach and that offering specific support to student-athletes may beg the question:

“will some students think it’s fair that they don’t have a commitment to sport, but they do have a commitment at home to a family business?”. (Mary)

Philomena voices that challenges presented to other students *“whose college choices are dictated by a financial burden or family commitments at home”* can be compared to the challenges of student-athletes.

4.4.3 The role of collaboration in supporting student-athletes.

Each of the seven respondents expressed the benefits of collaboration between key personal in a student-athletes life. As explained by Patrick, *“if they collaborate well it can have huge benefits like not playing too much thus avoiding burnout, important matches not clashing”*. The importance of providing coherence between the different parties involved is recognised by Imelda who has experienced the importance of strong collaboration:

“It’s a triangle with the guidance counsellor and the parent and the school with the student in the middle, a student-centred approach. Communication is huge when you’re the link as you want to know what parent’s plans and hopes are, as well as the young person’s dreams and aspirations. So, you’re clear on how serious they are about the commitment”. (Imelda)

Two participants indicated the benefits of good collaboration but also highlighted the challenge of time and organisation in ensuring its effectiveness. Kate’s question of *“I just wonder how it would work in reality?”* reflects the concern of participants in finding a collaborative support that caters for all people involved, including the student-athlete, parents, management and teachers.

Philomena indicates that collaboration *“would lead to a more holistic approach”* in supporting student athletes but offers insights into the possible challenges of collaboration with a student-athletes’ managers or coaches. The issue of data protection and confidentiality was highlighted:

“Then where does that start and end? Where does data protection start and end? So, I don’t think it’s simple for a manager or coach to liaise with a school”. (Philomena)

4.5 A whole school approach.

Each of the seven respondents highlighted that if additional methods of support for dual career student-athletes were going to be introduced in their school, it must be developed as a whole school approach. Highlighted in the subtheme relating to CPD, two respondents suggested that a guidance counsellor's role could involve further education of supporting dual career student-athletes, enabling them to better assist the development of whole school approaches. The other five respondents expressed that while they would continue to support students in the best way they can, it was not their responsibility to become involved in the whole school development of policies or strategies related to supporting student-athletes. The challenges of a whole school approach when implementing certain supports are also described by the participants. These challenges offer insights into the supports that schools offer, highlighting a very individualistic approach by schools in supporting student-athletes.

4.5.1 Whole school supports offered to student-athletes.

In finding ways to support student-athletes, respondents suggested additional methods to the counselling and careers support given by the guidance counsellor. Kate suggested that “*a school could adapt some sort of form to gather information on student-athletes*”, while Mary recognised that if

“we knew the important dates in the lifespan of their sports then maybe we could support and facilitate them with their year heads and subject teachers”. (Mary)

Two respondents highlighted that the use of curriculum material could offer student-athletes an insight into some of the competences needed in navigating a dual career:

“Self-management, time management and those, we would always try to deliver through our SPHE classes in preparing student resilience for the unexpected”.
(Philomena)

“Yes, I think the role of the PE teacher, and with Wellbeing now being a subject in Junior Cycle I think there's a bit happening earlier. So, I think maybe they could help to identify students and build up a sense of encouragement across the school”. (Mary)

Collaboration among the staff is also highlighted, where teachers and management are made aware of dual career student-athletes in supporting them through their challenges at school. By

“[bringing] a certain amount into the awareness of other staff and they can be a liaison, as always, with the parent and young person as well”. (Imelda)

The information a guidance counsellor has about student-athletes

“could be fed to the year heads and the chaplain I suppose. So, I think whoever might be meeting them on a one-to-one basis should have that information”. (Emma)

This sharing of information is further highlighted by Emma in suggesting:

“Well I think every teacher should be made aware of a student-athlete, no more than if a student has a special need. I think when they come into first year, and again as they progress through school, teachers are made aware of students in their class that are at a high level of sport”. (Emma)

These findings indicate the collaborative and innovative methods that schools offer, or could potentially offer, when providing a network of support in educating and supporting dual career student-athletes.

4.5.2 Combating challenges by using a whole school approach.

All seven respondents indicated that the most effective methods of supporting dual career student-athletes would be as a result of a whole school approach. The implementation of additional support for student-athletes *“would have to come from a management position and then over time it would just filter into the culture”* (Mary). If supports were deemed to be appropriate in developing a supportive network for student-athletes, then *“it definitely shouldn’t all come down to the guidance counsellor”* (Emma). Kate suggests that while the guidance counsellor can play a role in bringing methods of support to the management, it is then their job to relay the information to the whole school:

“I think it can be definitely brought to management but then it would be up to management to bring it to the awareness of all in the school. Maybe once a year at the beginning of the year, or even at staff meetings, it could come in there”. (Kate)

Mary indicates that *“it would have to come from the top down”*, which echoes Jacinta’s view that

“there would have to be a whole-school support plan where all teachers would have to buy into it. It would really have to come from management, and I think teachers that don’t abide by it would have to be taken aside and shown this career plan”. (Jacinta)

Kate also offered suggestions in relation to the measures that a whole school approach could adapt by establishing committees, initiating surveys, or ensuring that other members of staff could facilitate the supporting of student-athletes:

“perhaps then a sports committee could be established with all people involved in sport and get some information back on that. Surveying the kids to see what their needs are and if they are being met”.

(Kate)

“if you had a member of staff that was very passionate about sport you could collaborate with them and so if the guidance counsellor wasn’t personally involved in sports themselves they might feel that they could have the conversation with them and pass on the information”.

(Kate)

The findings related to a whole school approach highlight the individualistic approach that the management of schools are left to decide upon when supporting dual career student-athletes.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the seven semi-structured interviews under five main themes and subthemes. The findings suggest that guidance counsellors recognise and appreciate the influence that participation in sport has on future career decisions. Findings also highlight the level of confidence among guidance counsellors in supporting student-athletes, despite very limited knowledge of the term dual career. In addressing the challenges that student-athletes face, the findings shine a light on the inconsistency of practice in supporting these students. The benefits and challenges of a whole school approach address the individualistic approach offered by schools in the absence of guiding information related to supporting dual career student-athletes.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will contextualise the findings of the literature review with the research findings of the study. These findings will be addressed in the context of the research questions of the study:

1. What are guidance counsellors' perceptions of their role in supporting dual career student athletes?
2. What supports can guidance counsellors put in place to allow dual career student athletes to progress successfully in both domains.
3. Do guidance counsellors have the knowledge and training to support dual career student athletes?
4. In what way do schools support student athletes in successfully navigating dual career status?

The discussion is presented using the five themes that emerged from the data analysis. It will synthesise the key learnings which arose from the literature review with these main themes derived from the research.

5.1 Guidance Counsellors' level of confidence in supporting dual career student-athletes.

The findings of this study show that only one participant had previous knowledge of the term dual career. Despite this, all but one participant expressed that they would feel confident in providing support to a dual career student-athlete in their school. This raises concerns about the void between a guidance counsellor's knowledge of dual careers and their confidence in supporting dual career student-athletes. After explaining the term, all participants acknowledged that further information and learning would provide benefit to their future practice with dual career student-athletes. From this standpoint, it is evident that despite guidance counsellors' eagerness to further educate themselves, a significant gap remains between their current knowledge of dual careers and the confidence expressed in supporting dual career student-athletes. With no literature that directly addresses how a guidance counsellor can support a DC student-athlete this is hardly surprising. Instead, a holistic approach to "ensure the needs of those seeking guidance are met" (NCGE 2007, p. 11), across the personal, educational, and vocational domains, is highlighted across guidance literature.

As outlined in chapter two, the development of the HAC model (Wylleman *et al.*, 2013) provides a framework for the multidimensional nature of a dual career. It addresses the athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational and financial aspects of an athlete's career. Considering holistic models and the extensive research of dual career experiences and dual career as a multidisciplinary topic (Guidotti *et al.*, 2015; Li & Sum, 2017; Kornback, 2017), the EU DC Guidelines (2012) highlight the occurrence of athletes' DCs at secondary level education. This is linked to the pathways or transitions that student-athletes face during this time, both in education (class attendance, assignment deadlines, exam success) and sport (pressures of training and performance, possible injury, advancement to senior levels). With vast research across Europe on the holistic development of DC athletes, the complete void of the term dual career in an Irish context points to the skewed level of confidence that guidance counsellors possess when supporting dual career student-athletes.

The findings conveyed that guidance counsellors' confidence stems from their focus on the vocational support offered to student-athletes. In particular, a guidance counsellor's support often lies with ensuring that a student-athlete understands the vocational and financial element to dual, or sports-based, careers. This is reflected in participants interest in CPD related to the scholarship and CAO performance points opportunities available to student-athletes. Furthermore, when considering the personal support given to student-athletes, the "passion" (Jacinta) that a guidance counsellor holds for sport is viewed as an influential factor. This passion is also linked to their interest in CPD and developing their capacity to support student-athletes. When considering research by Ronkainen *et al.* (2018), depicting that identity is heavily influenced by narrative resources that are available to a student-athlete, a worrying insight is highlighted. An inconsistency in such narratives depends on either the passion that an individual guidance counsellor has for sport, or the vocational relevance they place on dual career opportunities. Inevitably, the participants' level of confidence points to an uninformed approach to supporting student-athletes, often based on an individual guidance counsellors existing perceptions and motivations towards sport.

5.2 Participation in sport has an influence on career decision making.

Participants highlight the many individual influences that are considered by DC student-athletes when transitioning from secondary education to third-level education. Guidance counsellors offer the opinion that student-athletes choose sports-based careers or select certain colleges or college courses to help facilitate their dual career. This is reflected in the research of Aunola *et al.* (2018) on the dynamics of low academic but high athletic motivations, and vice versa, as strong predictors of students' career aspirations. The varying motivations of DC student-athletes' choosing future career options is highlighted by participants in relation to sporting aspirations or financial assistance from scholarships. However, this introduces a possible confound in that guidance counsellors dismiss key psychological influences of student-athletes when accepting that they make future career decisions based solely on sporting motivations. The construction of future plans of student-athletes is noted by Ryba *et al.* (2017) when highlighting the significant influence that sporting or educational events can play on athletes' future decisions. This suggests that recent success in a sporting domain might influence their career decisions, but also that recent failures could negatively influence future choices.

In 2004, Wylleman *et al.* presented a deeper look at the career transitions of athletes, developing a holistic approach that considered the total lifespan of an athlete, including their academic and vocational development. This is presented in studies across Europe that highlight the inseparable nature of the psychological, psychosocial, and financial challenges that dual career athletes face (Brown *et al.*, 2015; DeBois *et al.*, 2015; Geraniosova & Ronkainen, 2015).

This draws attention to two relevant insights that participation in sport has on future career decision making. Firstly, guidance counsellors recognise the varying influences and motivations that impact student-athletes' decision-making and strive to provide support in relation to colleges, college courses, and scholarships that best serve a potential dual career. Secondly, the lack of understanding and knowledge that guidance counsellors hold on dual careers points to a potential discrepancy in providing a holistic approach related to the motives behind a student-athletes future career decision. These findings suggest that guidance counsellors' admittance of how influential participation in sport is on career decision-making should go hand in hand with a greater knowledge of "the intertwined relationships between different dimensions of DC" (Guidotti *et al.*, 2015. p. 17).

5.3 The challenges of student-athletes balancing academic and athletic lives.

The challenges of balancing a dual career during an adolescent's lifespan unearths contrasting motivations and considerations regarding their academic and athletic identities. The focus on academic endeavour or competitive performance is naturally dependent on the time or situation of a student-athlete's life, with the achievement of both described as finding a DC balance (Stamboulova *et al.*, 2015). In becoming confident and comfortable living this balance, student-athletes must become aware that it is impossible to always give 100% in sport and studies (Stamboulova *et al.*, 2015). Trying to understand this adds an additional element to the psychological and identity development of an adolescent student-athlete. The complexity of these challenges, present throughout the lifespan of a post-primary student-athlete, is highlighted in research that shows a lack of significant association between student-athletes' academic and athletic identities (Sturm *et al.*, 2011; Yukhymenko-Lescroart 2018; van Rens, 2019). This type of fluctuating identity, dependent on a student-athletes focus on academic or athletic goals at any point in time, is reflected in the findings. Guidance counsellor's shared experiences of providing students with counselling due to student-athletes being injured, let go from their sporting team, or repeating certain years of study to focus on sport. These examples give a clear insight into the strain that can be placed on a student-athletes identity development.

Overcoming these challenges and maintaining a DC balance is associated with the development of competences for coping with the stressors of typical DC scenarios (De Brandt *et al.* 2017; Graczyk *et al.*, 2017). The benefits of upskilling and developing competences in overcoming DC management, planning, adaptability, and mental resolve are also addressed by Cosh & Tully (2015). The psychosocial domain presents challenges for student-athletes in developing and maintaining important relationships with teammates, coaches, friends, teachers and even their family during the pursuit of their DC. This is recognised in the findings as participants cite the struggles that student-athletes face when trying to please all the different relationships in their lives. Participants express differing views on these challenges. Some acknowledge the beneficial role that collaboration can play in supporting student-athletes. Others express that the responsibility lies with the student-athletes themselves in developing and maintaining these relationships. The additional stressors that may be placed on the individual student-athlete during either of these approaches is not addressed by the participants.

In discussing this theme further insight is given to an underlying current thus far in that while guidance counsellors show awareness and recognition of challenges facing student-athletes when finding a DC balance, a lack of informed support remains. The findings firstly mirror

existing literature on the challenges and stressors presented to student-athletes. However, the findings related to the personal responsibility of a student-athlete contrast to research suggesting that assistance should be provided in the development and upskilling of competences among student-athletes. This highlights that it is guidance counsellors lack of knowledge and training related to dual careers that hinders their holistic support with student-athletes.

5.4 The professional role of Guidance Counsellors when supporting student-athletes.

The findings of this theme highlight the conflicting nature of support that guidance counsellors offer student-athletes. As guidance counsellor's professional role embodies offering support to all students, the issue of supporting all students equally, and the time constraints of these supports is highlighted. Conflict then arises as guidance counsellors understand the benefits of supporting student-athletes but are hesitant in providing it, at the risk of an overburdening workload being created.

Literature outlines the aim of a guidance counsellor in a post-primary school as helping young people to “make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent to these choices” (NCGE, 2004. p. 12). The IGC and DES dictate that effective practice requires theoretical knowledge and skills in personal, educational, and vocational counselling, as well as the stages of psychological development of students. These recommended practices represent the diverse nature of a guidance counsellor's role. Firstly, in the skills of establishing counselling relationships based on good rapport, consent, and confidentiality (IGC, 2017). Secondly, providing educational guidance that builds a self-efficacy in students regarding subject choices, career planning and exploration (DES, 2005). Thirdly, represented in vocational guidance that helps students to identify key skills, interest and abilities related to future career planning (IGC, 2017). The findings of this study clearly indicate the awareness of this holistic approach among participants. Examples are provided of the personal counselling required when supporting student-athletes who are finding the psychological or emotional elements of sport or school excessive. Educational guidance is provided in addressing challenges of balancing a dual career such as the time management and study skills required. Most notably, most consideration is given to the vocational guidance provided to student-athletes. Ensuring information is given related to suitable sports-based careers or the opportunities that scholarships and CAO performance points offer was deemed crucial in supporting student-athletes.

Further study of research detailing the healthy lifestyles of DC athletes highlights that the lack of wellbeing factors in a dual career can lead to burnout or dropout (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2017). This research should prove relevant to guidance counsellors as it recognises that high expectations in either the educational or sporting domains will ultimately lead to burnout symptoms in the opposite domain. In appreciating a holistic approach to guidance, support must be given to student-athletes in maintaining a DC balance to avoid such burnout in school or sport. The findings present a conflicting view in relation to providing this level of support. As discussed, all participants acknowledge the importance of the vocational guidance provided. However, with some participants outlining a very hands-on approach involving supportive plans, study plans and helping student-athletes become aware of the challenges and obstacles involved in a DC, other participants provide a contrasting view. Guidance counsellors realise the importance of providing guidance for all students equally, and so feel that offering extra support to student-athletes, namely in personal and educational guidance, would be deemed unfair to other students needing help.

The endeavour of a holistic approach in supporting all students equally is perhaps a limitation in the approach of guidance counsellors. With findings showing a clear awareness and acknowledgement of the supports that could be offered, guidance counsellors seem to be cautious of supporting student-athletes to the level that they recognise as beneficial. This outlook can be theorised in two ways. Firstly, the lack of education regarding dual careers and the most effective methods of support hinders how guidance counsellors approach supporting student-athletes in a holistic manner. Secondly, there is evidence of a hesitancy to receiving this education and extra training because of the extra burden or time demands that it will inevitably place on the guidance counsellors already busy role in a school. This conflicting awareness of, but reluctance to learn and implement, the methods needed to support student-athletes points to the contradictory role guidance counsellors play. Ultimately, this leads to a large inconsistency in the professional role of guidance counsellors when supporting student-athletes. Policy makers need to be made aware of these inconsistencies and consider providing guidance counsellors with the relevant information needed to provide a holistic approach to dual career student-athletes.

5.5 A whole school approach.

As shown in the findings, all participants expressed that effective and comprehensive support being implemented in their school would have to come from management in a top down approach. Guidance counsellors are aware of the challenges of a dual career, and have

experience in supporting DC student-athletes. However, the feeling that “*it definitely shouldn’t all come down to the guidance counsellor*” (Emma), seems to be the reverberating opinion that points to the necessity for a whole school approach. This view is reflected in the literature across both guidance counselling frameworks and dual career support systems. Both points firmly in the direction of effective support being provided by a collaborative, whole system, environment for dual career student-athletes. The Indecon Review of Career Guidance (2019) recognises that whole school guidance plans will ensure the “structured response to the educational, vocational and personal needs of the student” (p. v). Additionally, DES Circulars (0010/2017) and the Education Act (1998) acknowledge that guidance incorporated into a school’s overall framework will effectively assist students on a whole school basis. European and worldwide studies have found that rather than simply providing a protective scaffold or controlling plans of student-athletes, a focus should be placed on the whole environment that the student-athlete is a part of (Ryan *et al.*, 2017; Sorkkila *et al.*, 2018).

Methods of whole school supports being offered were highlighted by participants. In gathering information through surveys or collaborating with other staff in supporting DC student-athletes, participants offered insights into some schools existing approaches. In reference to the DC competency framework outlined by the GEES (2016), participants acknowledged that many of the competences are similar to curriculum content already taught to all students in SPHE and PE lessons. The benefits of such a supporting environment, where its members collaborate in anticipating problems and assisting in solutions were deemed paramount in providing an effective dual career support environment (Knight *et al.*, 2018). With reference to the “Ecology of DC” (2018) project, emphasising the use of a DCDE and the Holistic Athletic Approach (Henriksen, 2010), the literature offers a comparison to these methods of support. In the Irish post-primary school context, the proposal of “sports-friendly schools” can opt to develop themselves into DCDE’s where a Holistic Athletic Approach can be utilised to support DC student-athletes.

Again, these findings show the inconsistent nature of efforts that are made to support student-athletes in schools. While enthusiasm may exist to support student-athletes, many guidance counsellors highlight their limitations in relation to time, and the levels of support appropriate, when they do not feel supported by school management. With literature highlighting the link between a lack of support in the wellbeing factors of dual career athletes leading to burnout and dropout from sport and school, serious consideration needs to be taken by school managements (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2017).

This also shines a light on the position that school management may find themselves in. In facilitating and nurturing dual career student-athletes, schools are offered little information and support in the Irish context. Consequently, the dual career student-athletes attending post-primary education are offered little structured or knowledgeable support while navigating their academic and athletic lives. This is a concern that needs to be brought to the attention of policy makers.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter served to contextualise the findings of the literature review with the research findings of the study. The discussion was presented using the five themes outlined in the findings, in the context of the primary research questions of the study. Findings indicate the lack of knowledge of the term dual career among guidance counsellors. Participants in this study expressed an awareness of the influence that sport participation has on future career decisions. An acknowledgement of the challenges that navigating a dual career presents to student-athletes is also highlighted. Despite this, an emphasis is placed on vocational guidance with student-athletes. A lack of knowledge or CPD relating to dual careers points to the discrepancy in personal and educational guidance provided to student-athletes. A whole school approach is needed to compliment the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting student-athletes effectively when navigating a dual career.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the conclusions of this research in relation to the aims and objectives of the study. The strengths and limitations of the study are examined. Recommendations are suggested in the areas of policy, practice and future research. Reflexivity in relation to the personal and professional learning involved in the research process are also discussed before concluding the chapter.

6.1 Overview of Findings

The aim of this study was to explore the role of the guidance counsellor when supporting dual career student-athletes. The research was underpinned by four secondary research questions. These questions looked to examine the existing knowledge and perceptions of guidance counsellors related to dual careers. They also look at the support offered by individual guidance counsellors and the whole school support offered to student-athletes. The objectives of the research were determined and carried out during the study. Firstly, a critical analysis of the extensive literature related to dual careers was performed. Literature covered dual career pathways and transitions, the psychological and psychosocial elements of finding a dual career balance, as well as dual career identity and motivations. The wider influences on dual career wellbeing factors were evaluated by studies related to the supports offered to student-athletes, and the support environments student-athletes are a part of. The lack of recognition of the term dual career was highlighted in the Irish context. The key areas of the role of a guidance counsellor were also examined within Irish guidance policy and frameworks. Secondly, the collection of data from guidance counsellors in the post-primary setting relating to their role in supporting student-athletes was carried out. This gathering of information took the form of semi-structured interviews with the participants. Thematic analysis of the data ensured findings were contextualized with literature to examine the practice of guidance counsellors supporting dual career student-athletes.

Two fundamental issues arose from the study when considering the level of support offered to dual career student-athletes. The first issue was the lack of knowledge or understanding of the term dual career reported by participants. Furthermore, participants expressed confidence in supporting student-athletes, despite this lack of knowledge. The second issue highlighted the need for a whole school approach when supporting dual career student-athletes. All participants

agreed that if effective methods of support were going to be implemented in their schools, it would need to come from a managerial position.

With participants expressing confidence in supporting student-athletes regardless of their knowledge of the term dual career, a worrying insight was exposed. Literature explains that understanding the wellbeing factors of dual career student-athletes plays a critical role in the burnout and dropout of these athletes (Sorkkila *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, Sorkkila *et al.* (2017) confirm that burnout correlates with depressive symptoms and low self-esteem in athletes. This in mind, participants cited the personal counselling given to student-athletes regarding the psychological and psychosocial challenges of their dual career. Inevitably, without an adequate knowledge of wellbeing factors in dual career student-athletes, guidance counsellors support is limited. This does not reflect the holistic approach to guidance that is outlined in the Irish guidance model, suggesting that guidance practice involves equal, and interlinked, support in personal, educational, and vocational guidance for each student (DES 2005; IGC 2017). It should be noted here that guidance counsellors are fully aware of the challenges involved in navigating a dual career, having shared many of their experiences with student-athletes. Herein lies the concern. Guidance counsellors understand the challenges, but due to their lack of knowledge on the multidimensional nature of a dual career, they lean towards what they feel most confident with, vocational support. While this inevitably helps student-athletes in this domain, support in the psychological and psychosocial domains is lacking. This contrasts greatly to the holistic approaches outlined in guidance literature and frameworks, as well as the vast dual career research on the multidimensional nature of dual careers.

This issue lends itself strongly to the emphasis placed on a whole school approach by all participants. Despite being aware of the challenges of dual career athletes, and possible methods of support, guidance counsellors strongly feel that their impact is lessened in the absence of support from management in their school. When considering student-athlete supports such as supportive plans, flexibility in timetabling and curriculum, or gathering information from student-athletes related to training and competition, findings showed that a whole school plan led by management is required. This is reflected in literature which emphasises that instead of acting in a controlling manner or simply providing a protective scaffold for student-athletes, a schools environment must consider and recognise its role in

providing a support network for its student-athletes (Stambulova *et al.*, 2015; Ryan *et al.*, 2015; Sorkkila *et al.*, 2018). This reflects literature outlining that a structure and whole school plan is most beneficial in supporting and assisting students making choices and transitions in their lives (DES 2017; Indecon 2019).

The non-existent research of dual careers in an Irish context is inextricably linked to the lack of recognition of the term in national educational and sporting policies, studies and strategies. The trickledown effect of this is evident in the absence of consistent, structured support for student-athletes in post-primary schools. Little consideration is given to the fact the dual career student-athletes are different and do require additional support. Due to the lack of knowledge and awareness, school managements fail to consider the holistic support of student-athletes in their whole school support plans. Without whole school support, guidance counsellors offer support and assistance as best they can. Confident in the vocational guidance they offer, but lacking in the knowledge needed when considering the impact of psychological and psychosocial elements on dual career athlete's well-being.

6.2 Strengths and Limitations

6.2.1 Strengths

This research project contributes to the area of professional practice in the Irish post-primary setting. With the absence of existing research in supporting dual career student-athletes, this study contributes to the specific learning in this field. This research benefitted greatly from its interpretivist paradigm and the data generated from the semi-structured interviews. Rich data was gathered when exploring the participants realities, and in turn furthered the researcher's insights into guidance counsellor's professional roles (Thomas 2017). The use of a pilot interview with a qualified guidance counsellor was also a strength in the study. This process ensured that the most appropriate questions were asked, while also demonstrating the reliability of the use of prompt cards during the interview. This interview format allowed the collection of rich data on guidance counsellors perceptions and experiences with dual career student-athletes.

6.2.2 Limitations

The limitation of semi-structured interviews is discussed by Denscombe (2007) outlining the risk of non-standard responses, while data gathered relates to the context of participants involved. As expressed in section 3.32, the limitations of using Skype for Business are evident in the challenges of building a rapport with the participant and the effects of reading body

language and other non-verbal cues during the interview process. The researcher was also cognisant of the possibility of factors such as reactivity from participants when using Skype (Hearne *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the small sample size acts as a limitation to the research. A larger sample cohort would offer a more comprehensive collection of data related to the role of guidance counsellors supporting student-athletes. Broadening the sample to a wider geographical demographic would also provide greater insights when collecting data.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Policy

- Although guidance policy points to the holistic approach for all students, it is notably that the term dual career is absent from all policy. With extensive research carried out in the European and International context, the pursuing of a dual career needs to be given serious consideration in the discussion of combining sporting and educational or vocational goals. The recommendation to include the term dual career in policy is the first step to ensuring that recognition, awareness and training become evident in future practice and research in the field.

6.3.2 Practice

- The Department of Education need to distribute circulars to schools that outline how supporting dual career student-athletes should be included in the Whole School Guidance Plan. The circulars should include the definition of dual career and the clear description of the roles of all stakeholders in the school when providing a holistic approach to supporting dual career student-athletes.
- Training should be provided to the management of schools to provide information on the importance and effectiveness of a whole school approach to supporting student-athletes. Participants cited that providing many additional methods of support to student-athletes would have to come from management of a school. Training here is recommended to enhance a school's knowledge and practice in providing an effective dual career support environment.
- Training needs to be provided for guidance counsellors who will be supporting dual career student-athletes as part of their professional practice in a school setting. All participants cited that they provide support to student-athletes but only one participant had knowledge of the term dual career. Training is recommended to provide guidance counsellors with education on the personal, educational, vocational and psychological

impact that navigating a dual career can have on student-athletes. A greater insight into the multidimensional nature of a dual career should be given to guidance counsellor to ensure a holistic practice with student-athletes.

6.3.3 Research

- There is a clear and obvious lack of research in the area of dual careers in an Irish context. Opportunity exists in both second and third level education in Ireland to carry out research related to the benefits and impact of pursuing both educational or vocational and sporting careers. This research would provide a foundation for future practice and policy related to dual careers in the Irish context.
- Further research of existing supports that are offered to student-athletes, across their lifespan, is also recommended. Potential exists to build on the findings of this study by broadening the demographics of the study. A larger number of participants, including student-athletes at both second and third level education would favour data collection and findings. This research is recommended to enhance the support that student-athletes receive throughout the lifespan of their education.
- As outlined in European research, there is a need to add to existing literature with more specific research related to dual careers. Specific studies related to lifestyle and the wellbeing factors of dual career athletes will aid in the prevention of burnout or dropout. This recommendation aims to increase the research and information around dual careers from a whole person or holistic perspective.

6.4 Reflexivity in Relation to Personal and Professional Learning

Through my own personal interest in this research project, and its integral part to completing my MA programme, it has offered me invaluable personal and professional learning. In keeping a reflective journal throughout the research process, reflexivity was ensured during the critical stages of the study. I found this beneficial during and after my pilot interview and also particularly important after each interview when recording and evaluating the internal dialogue that was present when asking and interpreting questions and answers. My extensive engagement with the literature of dual careers has given me a depth of knowledge on the topic across European and International discourse. Through my reading and research into the professional role of the guidance counsellor I have also gained knowledge in my future professional practice.

Additionally, because of interviewing seven guidance counsellors I have gained insights into the various merits and challenges involved in their complex roles. Inevitably, these insights into the rewarding nature of supporting students, but also the challenges of time constraints and whole school approaches in practice, will have application to my future professional practice. I have also recognised that I must be aware of possible limitations that I may encounter involving student-athletes, where my knowledge of supporting dual career student-athletes might not be mirrored by the whole school support plan. While I will endeavour to support all students as best I can, I must be cognisant of the lack of dual career knowledge and training in the Irish context.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter concluded the research by providing an overview of the findings while considering the aims and objectives of the study. The strengths and limitations of the research were discussed, as well as recommendations from the researcher relating to the areas of policy, practice and research in the field of study. An insight into the personal and professional learnings of the researcher were also outlined.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Subject Information Sheet

EHSREC No: 2020_01_15_EHS



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

An exploration into the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Dear Volunteer,

As part of my Research Dissertation in my Postgraduate in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development in the University of Limerick, I am carrying out a study on the supports that post-primary school guidance counsellors can offer student-athletes. This information sheet will tell you what the study is about.

What is the study about?

The study aims to find out what way various post-primary schools, and their guidance counsellors, support their student-athletes in successfully navigating dual career status. Dual career is the term used to represent the experience of athletes when they endeavour to combine their efforts in pursuing a sporting career as well as their education or work.

What will I have to do?

Your involvement in the study will be during an interview which will be arranged between researcher and volunteer prior to the session. You will be invited to take part in an individual interview with the researcher. The interview will be semi-structured, comprising of two parts. Part one addresses demographic information and part two is comprised of questions about your experiences with student-athletes in practice, school supports for student-athletes and your opinion on training and continuous professional development in relation to student-athletes in dual careers. Prompt cards will also be used in the interview to provide information on current research of the topic. The interview will be audio-recorded.

What are the benefits?

The findings of the study might improve the professional practice of guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in relation to what supports a guidance counsellor, and their post-primary school, can put in place to allow dual career student-athletes to progress successfully in both sporting and educational domains.

What are the risks?

You might decide that you don't want to answer a question. If this happens, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to.

What if I do not want to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can choose not to take part or to stop your involvement in this study at any time.

What happens to the information?

The information that is collected will be kept private and stored securely and safely on the researchers' computer. The computers are protected with a password. Your name will not appear on any information. You will be assigned a fictitious name when the information is being written in a report by the researcher. The information that is gathered in the study will be kept for seven years. After this time, it will be destroyed.

Who else is taking part?

Numerous other guidance counsellors working in post-primary schools. These volunteers will be selected randomly in order to offer a rich variety of guidance counsellor experience and post-primary school practice when dealing with adolescent student-athletes pursuing dual careers.

What if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely event that something goes wrong during the interview, the interview session will immediately stop until the researcher and volunteer are ready to restart the session or the session would be stopped completely.

What happens at the end of the study?

At the end of the study the information will be used to present results. The information will be completely anonymous. No volunteer's name appears in any of the results. All data gathered from the research will be stored securely and safely by the researcher, Colm Flynn, in their office for 7 years. Information that is stored on computer will be stored by Colm on a computer that is password-protected.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you have any questions about the study you may contact either of the researchers. It is important that you feel that all your questions have been answered.

What happens if I change my mind during the study?

At any stage should you feel that you want to stop taking part in the study, you are free to stop and take no further part. There are no consequences for changing your mind about being in the study.

Contact name and number of Project Investigators.**Principal Investigator**

Ann Marie Young,

University of Limerick,

Tel (061) 234810

Email: AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie

Other investigator

Colm Flynn

Undergraduate Student,

University of Limerick.

0868499065

09005856@studentmail.ul.ie

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I would be grateful if you would consider participating in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Marie Young

Colm Flynn

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (quote approval number).

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

EHS Faculty Office

University of Limerick

Tel (061) 234101

Appendix B: Consent Form

EHSREC No: 2020_01_15_EHS



EHS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Title of Study: An exploration into the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Should you agree to participate in this study please read the statements below and if you agree to them, please sign the consent form.

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I understand that what the researchers find out in this study may be shared with others but that my name will not be given to anyone in any written material developed.
- I am fully aware of what I will have to do, and of any risks and benefits of the study.
- I know that I am choosing to take part in the study and that I can stop taking part in the study at any stage without giving any reason to the researchers.

This study involves audio recording. Please tick the appropriate box

- I am aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (audio) and I agree to this. However, if I feel uncomfortable at any time I can ask that the recording equipment be switched off. I understand that I can ask for a copy of my recording. I understand what will happen to the recordings once the study is finished. ☐
- I do not agree to being audio recorded in this study. ☐

After considering the above statements, I consent to my involvement in this research project.

Name: (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Investigator's Signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Research Privacy Notice



RESEARCH PRIVACY NOTICE

This Privacy Notice governs the use and storage of your personal data by the University of Limerick. The processing of this data is carried out in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) / Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 (“Data Protection Law”) and in accordance with this Data Protection Privacy Notice. The University is the Data Controller for personal data we process about you.

The purpose of this Data Protection Privacy Notice is to explain how the University uses and processes personal data we collect and hold about you as a research participant (“you”, “your”). This notice extends to all your personal data as defined under Article 2(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

1. Title and Purpose of the research project

1.1 An exploration into the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student-athletes.

1.2 Potential benefits that may arise from the research project

1.3 The findings of the study might improve the professional practice of guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in relation to what supports a guidance counsellor, and their post-primary school, can put in place to allow dual career student-athletes to progress successfully in both sporting and educational realms.

2. Research Ethics Committee

2.1 Ethical approval was granted by the EHS Research Ethics Committee on Tuesday 28th January 2020.

3. Identity of the Data Controller(s)

3.1 The Data Controller/Joint Controllers is/are:
University of Limerick, Plassey, Limerick.

4. Identity and Contact Details of the Data Protection Officer of the Data Controller(s)/

4.1 You can contact the University of Limerick’s Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.

5. The Identity of the Principal Investigator

- 5.1 The Principal Investigator for this Research Project is Ann-Marie Young, Academic Director of School Placement, School of Education, University of Limerick.

6. Why the University Holds Your Personal Data

- 6.1 The University must process your personal data in order to undertake research relating to the study's aims to find out what way various post-primary schools, and their guidance counsellors, support their student-athletes in successfully navigating dual career status.

7. Research Participant Personal Data held by the University

- 7.1 You provide us with your personal data to enable us to undertake the research project. Participation in this research project is voluntary and participants may withdraw without giving any reason. Should you wish to withdraw you may do so by contacting the Principal Investigator at AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie or writing to him/her at Ann-Marie Young, School of Education, University of Limerick, Limerick.
- 7.2 The categories of personal data collected/recorded may include:
Name and email address of participant. Personal data collected for this research project will be pseudonymised within 12 hours after collection. Truly anonymised data is not Personal Data.

8. Lawful Basis for University Processing Personal Data

- 8.1 Data Protection Law requires that the University must have a valid lawful basis in order to process personal data.
- 8.2 The University will rely on your explicit consent in order to process your personal data for research purposes. Consent must be freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of your wishes by which you (by a statement or by a clear affirmative action) signify agreement to the processing of personal data relating to you. Your decision not to consent will have no adverse consequences for you.
- 8.3 You are free to withdraw this consent and you can do so by contacting the Principal Investigator at the following email address AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie.

9. Protecting Your Personal Data

- 9.1 Reasonable appropriate administrative, technical, personnel procedural and physical measures are employed to safeguard Personal Data against loss, theft and unauthorised uses access, uses or modifications.
- 9.2 All researchers of the University must adhere to the University's Data Protection Policy when processing Personal Data on behalf of UL (available at www.ul.ie/dataprotection). Nonadherence to the University's Data Protection Policy may lead to disciplinary action. Researchers of the University shall undertake Data Protection Training before they engage in the research project.
- 9.3 Personal data collected for this research project will be pseudonymised within 12 hours after collection. Truly anonymised data is not Personal Data. Once data is anonymised for the purposes of this research project, the terms of this Privacy Notice will no longer apply.

10. Sharing Your Personal Data with Third Parties

- 10.1 The University will not disclose your personal data to third parties.

11. Retention of your Personal Data

- 11.1 All Personal Data collected for this research project will be retained in accordance with the University's [Records Management and Retention Policy](#). *The Retention Policy currently states a retention period of 7 years (July 2020). Where the personal data collected for this research will be held for a longer/shorter period, this should be stated here. Note that truly anonymised data is not personal data.*

12. Your Rights

- 12.1 Depending on the legal basis which we rely on to process your Personal Data, you may have the right to request that we:
- provide you with information as to whether we process your data and details relating to our processing, and with a copy of your personal data;
 - rectify any inaccurate data we might have about you without undue delay;
 - complete any incomplete information about you;
 - under certain circumstances, erase your Personal Data without undue delay;
 - under certain circumstances, be restricted from processing your data;
 - under certain circumstances, furnish you with the Personal Data which you provided us within a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format.
- 12.2 Requests for any of the above should be addressed by email to the Principal Investigator at AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie and the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie. Your request will be processed within 30 days of receipt. Please note, however, it may not be possible to facilitate all requests, for example, where the University is required by law to collect and process certain personal data including that personal information that is required of any research participant.
- 12.3 It is your responsibility to let the Principal Investigator know if your contact details change.

13. Queries, Contacts, Right of Complaint

- 13.1 Further information on Data Protection at the University of Limerick may be viewed at www.ul.ie/dataprotection. You can contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.
- 13.2 You have a right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (Supervisory Authority). While we recommend that you raise any concerns or queries with us first at the following email address AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie, you may contact that Office at info@dataprotection.ie or by writing to the Data Protection Commissioner, Canal House, Station Road, Portarlinton, Co. Laois.

14. Review

- 14.1 This Privacy Notice will be reviewed and updated from time to time to take into account changes in the law and the experience gained from the Notice in practice.

Appendix D: Ethics Correspondence

From: Anne.O'Brien <Anne.O'Brien@ul.ie>
Sent: Tuesday 28 January 2020 09:47
To: AnnMarie.Young <AnnMarie.Young@ul.ie>
Subject: 2020_01_15_EHS (ER)

Dear Ann-Marie

Thank you for your Research Ethics application which was recently reviewed by the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The recommendation of the Committee is outlined below:

Project Title: 2020_01_15_EHS (ER) An exploration into the role of the guidance counsellor in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Principal Investigator: Ann Marie Young

Recommendation: Approved

Please note that as Principal Investigator of this project you are required to submit a Research Completion Report Form (attached) on completion of this research study.

To ensure that UL informed consent forms are GDPR-compliant, ULREG has adopted a standardised consent form for all researchers to use. If you have not already done so, please update your informed consent form(s) using the attached templates when carrying out this and all future research. Please note that the adapted Research Privacy Notice should also be provided to participants.

Yours Sincerely

Anne O'Brien

Anne O'Brien

Senior Administrator

Research Ethics Committee

Faculty of Education & Health Sciences

Dámh an Oideachais agus na nEolaíochtaí Sláinte
University of Limerick

Ollscoil Luimnigh

Guthán / Phone: + 353 61 234101

Ríomhphost / Email: anne.obrien@ul.ie

Gréasán / Web: www.ehs.ul.ie

Appendix E: Final Interview Schedule

Demographic Information

Gender Male____ Female____ Other____

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. How many years have you been practicing as a Guidance Counsellor?

3. What college(s) have you attended for your qualifications?

4. What type of school do you currently work in?
 (a) Voluntary College (b) Vocational School/ Community College
 (c) Community School
5. Would you describe the culture of your school as pro-sport? If so, what evidence is there of this?

6. Did you play sport yourself as a post-primary student?

7. Did you play individual or team sport?

8. Did you play at an elite level?

Interview Questions

Experience with student-athletes

1. Do you think sport is important in a student's life? Why/Why not?
2. Do you believe participation in sport influences future career decisions for students, and if so, to what extent?
3. Have you ever provided specific counselling or careers advice to a student-athlete?

Guidance Counsellor knowledge and training

Prompt Card 1 will be used to introduce the topic of dual careers.

4. Have you been aware of the term dual career before?
 - (a) If yes, where/how have you obtained your knowledge?
 - (b) If no, what are your impressions of the term dual career?
5. What do you believe your role as a Guidance Counsellor is/might be when working with dual career student-athletes?
6. How confident do/would you feel in supporting and guiding a student-athlete navigating a dual career?
7. What type of training/support do you think could benefit Guidance Counsellor's in supporting dual careers in schools?
8. Elite athletes can be defined as professional athletes or athletes that represent at a national or international level. What are your views on the demands placed on adolescent athletes competing in high level competition but still in an amateur capacity? E.g. GAA players, club rugby, soccer, swimming etc.

Guidance Counsellor supports for dual career student-athletes

9. To what extent do you think schools should provide support for student-athletes who are navigating a dual career?
10. Who do/would you consider to be the key personnel involved in a student-athlete's effort to combine sport, education and private life?
11. What are your views on the level of collaboration between these people?

Prompt Card 2 will be used to introduce the concept of dual career student-athlete competences.

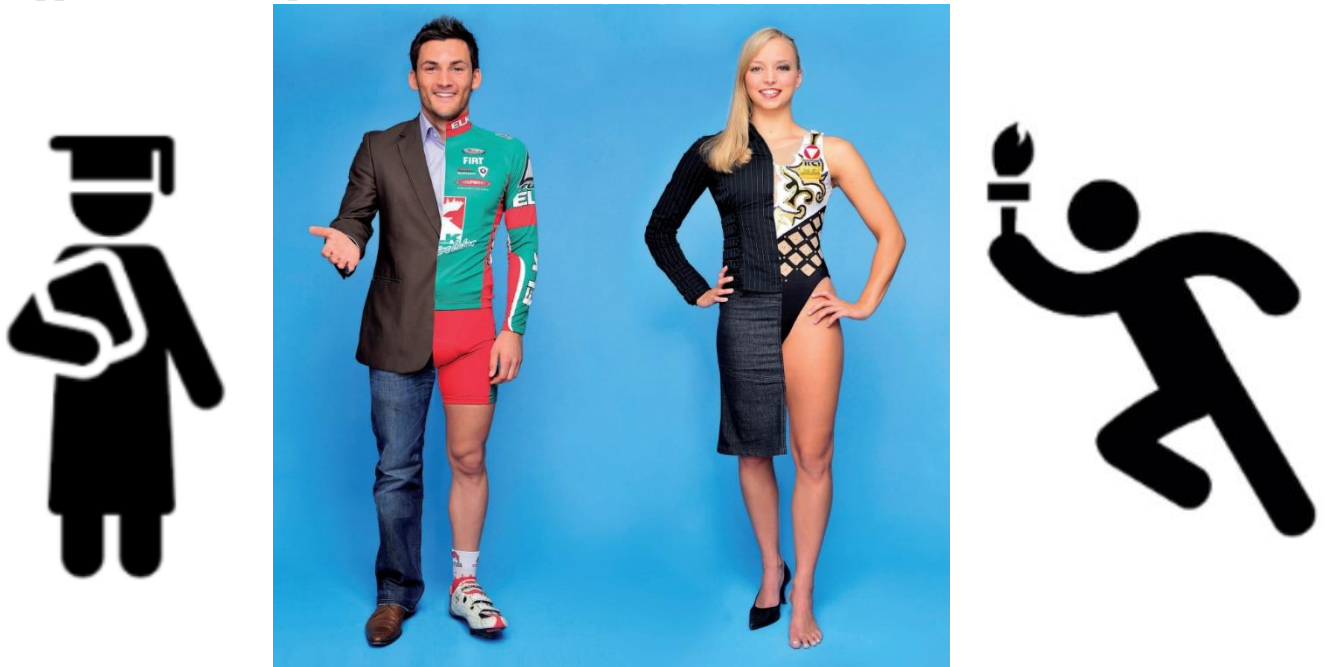
12. What are your views on the accuracy/relevance of these dual career competences in relation to the following:
 - (a) Student-athletes in your school
 - (b) Student-athletes in Ireland
13. In your view, how important is the role of the Guidance Counsellor in contributing to the development of the following competences in dual career student-athletes?
 - (a) Dual career management competences
 - (b) Self-regulation and resilience competences
 - (c) Social competences
 - (d) Career planning competences

School supports for dual career student-athletes

Prompt Card 3 will be used to introduce the concept of dual career support provider competences.

14. With the dual career support provider competences outlined in the GEES research in mind, some of the facilities included in their programmes included tailored timetables for student-athletes, personal study plans, teacher awareness around the levels of competition the student athlete is competing in, support around missed school work due to competition, study-buddies or peer study groups to help students catch up with missed school-work, and collaboration with coaches.
What challenges or difficulties might you envisage if schools were to develop such strategies?
15. What do you believe a Guidance Counsellor's role would be in the development or facilitation of such dual career support provider competences in a school/college?

Appendix F: Prompt Card 1



Athletes often face challenges to combine their sporting career with education or work. The aim to succeed at the highest level of a sport demands intensive training and competitions at home and abroad, which can be difficult to reconcile with the challenges and restrictions in the educational system and the labour market.

Not only high levels of motivation, commitment, resilience and responsibility from the athlete, but also special arrangements are needed to avoid the situation where talented and elite sportspeople are forced to choose between education and sport or work and sport.

Such '**dual career**' arrangements should be beneficial for athletes' sporting careers, allow for education or work, promote the attainment of a new career after the sporting career and protect and safeguard the position of athletes.

Guidance could be helpful to develop and improve the conditions needed for sustainable dual career programmes allowing for tailor-made arrangements for talented and elite athletes throughout Europe, either in their position as a student-athlete or employee-athlete.

(EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, 2012).

Appendix G: Prompt Card 2

GEES Handbook for Dual Career Support Providers (DCSPs)

Table 4. The 58 competences grouped into 4 competence factors (De Brandt et al., 2016a).

DC Management competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-discipline to manage the demands of your study and sport combination • Ability to use your time efficiently • Dedication to succeed in both sport and study • Ability to plan conscientiously in advance • Ability to prioritize what needs to be done • Willingness to make sacrifices and choices to succeed in sport and study • Ability to make your own responsible choices with regard to your study and sport career • Clear understanding of what it takes to succeed in sport and study • Ability to create individualized routines (for sport and study) • Belief that study and sport can positively complement each other
Self-regulation and resilience competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in your own ability to overcome the challenges in sport and study • Assertiveness (being self-assured and acting with confidence) • Ability to cope with stress in sport and study • Ability to regulate emotions in different situations • Ability to use setbacks in sport and/or study as a positive stimulus • Ability to focus on here and now, without being distracted • Being patient about the progression of your sport and study career • Perseverance during challenging times and in the face of setbacks • Ability to negotiate (in order to stand up for your own interests) • Awareness of your strengths, weaknesses and capabilities • Ability to critically evaluate and modify your goals when needed • Ability to set realistic goals in sport and study
Social competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking advice to the right people at the right time • Eagerness to listen and learn from others and past experiences • Ability to maintain relations with important others • Ability to make social contacts with peers in study and sport • Ability to collaborate with support staff in study and sport • Ability to resolve conflicts • Understanding the importance of rest and recuperation • Ability to adapt well to new situations • Ability to put sport and study performances in perspective
Career planning competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being prepared for the unexpected and having back up plans • Ability to be flexible and change plans if necessary • Being curious to explore career plans outside elite sport • Vision of where you want to go in life after your dual career • Having knowledge about your career options in study and sport
Other competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to spend and manage your own money • Ability to live independently with competent life skills







Table 5. Top 10 competence profile for perceived importance.

Rank	Competence item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Perseverance during challenging times and in the face of setbacks	4.65	0.58
2	Understanding the importance of rest and recuperation	4.63	0.62
3	Ability to cope with stress in sport and study	4.62	0.59
4	Dedication to succeed in both sport and study	4.57	0.63
5	Belief in your own ability to overcome the challenges in sport and study	4.52	0.64
6	Willingness to make sacrifices and choices to succeed in sport and study	4.51	0.68
7	Ability to use your time efficiently	4.51	0.64
8	Ability to collaborate with support staff in study and sport (e.g. coach, teacher, support provider...)	4.51	0.68
9	Self-discipline to manage the demands of your study and sport combination (e.g. work independently without the supervision of others)	4.49	0.65
10	Assertiveness (being self-assured and acting with confidence)	4.45	0.69

Table 11. Top 10 DC athletes' competence profile for perceived need to develop.

Rank	Competence item	Importance	Possession	Difference	
		<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Ability to cope with stress in sport and study	4.62	3.58	1.04	1.09
2	Assertiveness (being self-assured and acting with confidence)	4.45	3.48	0.97	1.11
3	Ability to use your time efficiently	4.51	3.56	0.95	1.01
4	Ability to use setbacks in sport and/or study as a positive stimulus	4.34	3.47	0.88	1.04
5	Being patient about the progression of your sport and study career	4.36	3.49	0.87	1.06
6	Belief in your own ability to overcome the challenges in sport and study	4.52	3.65	0.87	0.98
7	Understanding the importance of rest and recuperation	4.63	3.83	0.81	1.01
8	Ability to focus on here and now, without being distracted	4.28	3.48	0.80	1.03
9	Perseverance during challenging times and in the face of setbacks	4.65	3.86	0.79	0.86
10	Ability to regulate emotions in different situations	4.24	3.49	0.75	1.09

Table 2. The seven DC scenarios for athletes (De Brandt et al., 2016b)

	<p>Scenario 1 You are about to start a challenging study year with exams that conflict with a crucial competitive phase. You want to successfully do both.</p>
	<p>Scenario 2 In view of your (future) professional career you want to select the best study plan and make the best study choices to manage the integration of both sport and study in the future.</p>
	<p>Scenario 3 Your competition and training schedule means that you will miss significant days of study and (group) assignments. You need to catch up during and/or after competition/training camp.</p>
	<p>Scenario 4 You (have to) make a decision to leave home and your family to relocate for your sport and/or studies (e.g. boarding school, student accommodation etc.). You have to adapt to a new social environment and manage this with less family support.</p>
	<p>Scenario 5 You are studying and competing, but you are suffering from an injury. You want to continue to study, compete and recover from injury.</p>
	<p>Scenario 6 The combination of sport and study makes it challenging to have a rich social life outside of sport (e.g. time with friends, going out...). You need to find a balance between your dual career and social activities outside of sport.</p>
	<p>Scenario 7 You don't have enough money to balance study and sport, and you need to find a way to generate an income.</p>

Appendix H: Prompt Card 3

Table 27. List of competences within the factor structure (Defruyt et al., 2016b)

Reflection and self-management competences	Ability to reflect on own values and functioning to improve your practice
	Ability to adapt the way of providing support in accordance to the feedback of others
	Ability to maintain own well-being and energy level necessary for work with dual career athletes
	Commitment to keep (self-) developing as a dual career support provider
Advocacy and dissemination competences	Ability to realistically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your practice
	Ability to collaborate with key stakeholders (e.g. coach, parents) in the dual career athlete's life
	Ability to negotiate with dual career stakeholders (e.g. dual career athletes, coaches, teachers) ensuring that the interests of all are considered in the integration of a compatible outcome
	Ability to build and coordinate a network of partners
Organizational competences	Ability to collaborate with decision-making bodies advocating for interests of dual career athletes
	Sensitivity to environmental contexts (e.g. federation, family) that dual career athletes belong to
	Ability to complete administrative tasks (e.g. mails, data processing, file maintenance...)
	Ability to manage a variety of tasks (from one area to another) on a daily basis
Empowerment competences	Ability to be flexible in responding to unexpected events (e.g., injury) in the dual career athlete's life
	Ability to coordinate different events in an effective manner
	Ability to act in congruence with the mission of the organization
	Ability to enhance dual career athlete's competences concerning organization and planning of the dual career athlete's life
Awareness of DC athlete's environment	Ability to make dual career athletes self-aware of their dual career competences
	Ability to stimulate autonomy in dual career athletes
	Ability to prepare dual career athletes for the challenges of specific transitions
	Ability to enhance communication skills in dual career athletes
Relationship competences	Ability to make dual career athletes aware of the importance of rest and recuperation
	Knowledge of the sports related to dual career athletes you work with
	Knowledge of the educational system(s)
	Ability to take a holistic (i.e. sport, education/vocation, psychological, psychosocial and financial) view of the dual career athlete's life
Other	Understanding the key transition phases of dual career athletes linked to the long term athlete development pathway
	Ability to take into account the diverse background (e.g. socio-demographic) of the dual career athlete
	Ability to maintain a trust based relationship with dual career athletes
	Ability to treat each dual career athlete in an individualized manner
Relationship competences	Ability to conduct in-depth interviews for analyzing the different steps of his/her life path
	Ability to be an active and supportive listener
	Ability to maintain clear expectations and boundaries in the dual career athlete - support provider relationship
	Ability to support dual career athletes emotionally in the face of setbacks
Other	Ability to refer the dual career athlete to another professional if necessary
	Ability to implement theoretical frameworks and research findings into practice
Other	Being observant of a dual career athlete's mental health status

The Importance Profiles

1	2	3	4	5
unimportant	of little importance	moderately important	important	very important

Table 28. Top 10 competence profile for perceived importance.

Rank	Competence item	M
1	Ability to treat each dual career athlete in an individualized manner	4.6
2	Ability to maintain a trust based relationship with dual career athletes	4.55
3	Ability to be an active and supportive listener	4.55
4	Ability to refer the dual career athlete to another professional if necessary	4.53
5	Ability to be flexible in responding to unexpected events (e.g. injury) in the dual career athlete's life	4.52
6	Knowledge of the educational system(s)	4.46
7	Ability to stimulate autonomy in dual career athletes	4.45
8	Being observant of a dual career athlete's mental health status	4.4
9	Ability to enhance dual career athlete's competences concerning organization and planning of the dual career athlete's life	4.35
10	Ability to adapt the way of providing support in accordance to the feedback of others	4.34

(C) Selection of the most important competences per scenario

To guarantee the context-specificity, several scenarios for DCSPs were developed. Starting from a general group discussion in the GEES Amsterdam meeting, the experts from the meeting further developed and selected the scenarios for DCSPs through digital expert's discussions. Around 35 internationally renowned dual career researchers and expert practitioners from 9 EU countries were involved in these expert's discussions. Thus, the following DCSP scenarios were selected (Defruyt et al., 2016c):



Scenario #1 A member of the dual career athletes' **support environment** (e.g. coach, parent, teacher, manager) **does not support** the athlete to engage in a dual career. You want to make sure that the athlete can make his/her **own responsible choices**.



Scenario #2 A dual career athlete leaves home and family to **relocate** for sport and/or studies (e.g. boarding school, student accommodation etc.). You want to **help the athlete to adapt** to a new social environment and manage this with less family support.



Scenario #3 In view of his/her (future) professional career a dual career athlete wants to **select the best study plan**. You want to **help the athlete make the best study choices** to manage the integration of both sport and study in the future



Scenario #4 A dual career athlete is about to start **a challenging study year** that conflict with his/her (more demanding) competition and training schedule (e.g. missing significant days of study, (group) assignments, exams, an internship...). You want to **help the athlete to successfully do both**.



Scenario #5 You identify a **need to refer** a dual career athlete for additional professional help (e.g. to a psychologist, financial advisor...). You want to **help the athlete by referring on the right manner** to the right person.



Scenario #6 A dual career athlete has **wrong expectations** regarding your work as a DC support provider, expecting that you will do the work in his/her place. You want the athlete **to take (more) responsibility** for his/her own tasks.

For each scenario, DCSPs were asked to indicate: a) If and how often they experienced this scenario b) how they managed the scenario c) the 5 competences from the list of 35 that are most important to manage the scenario successfully. These questions serve the purpose of formulating scenario-specific profiles.

Appendix I: Prompt Card Scripts

Prompt Card 1

As we have briefly talked about student-athletes and the potential influence that participation in sport may have, I would like to show you my first prompt card. The purpose of this card is to present you with information on dual careers, as outlined by the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers, 2012.

Read the information provided.

The logos and symbols that you see at the bottom of the card represent many of the leading participating bodies across Europe when it comes to the development and improvement of dual career conditions for student-athletes.

Explain some of the logos and who/what they represent.

Have you any questions in relation to any of the information given?

Proceed with interview questions.

Prompt Card 2

Having talked about student-athletes navigating a dual career, the role of a Guidance Counsellor in this pursuit, and the possible supports that a school can offer, I would like to use this second prompt card to introduce you to research completed for the Gold in Education and Sport (GEES) Handbook for Dual Career Support Providers.

This research was conducted in 9 EU countries, with the participation of 4196 dual careers athletes in 512 different dual career support providers. Student-athletes were presented with seven typical dual career scenarios (*show back of prompt card*) and asked to identify the competences needed to overcome these scenarios. As a result, 38 competences were identified, which are shown here under four different headings.

Read the headings of the 4 sections and read some random competences from each section.

At the bottom of the card you can see two more tables, which represent what students perceive to be the top ten most important competences of a dual career student-athlete. (*Show table of the left*) This table then represent what the student-athletes perceived to be their top ten competences that needed to be developed for a dual career. (*Show table of the right*)

Have you any questions in relation to any of the information given?

Proceed with interview questions.

Prompt Card 3

Similar to prompt card 2, this card will present you with information on the research completed for the Gold in Education and Sport (GEES) Handbook for Dual Career Support Providers.

Using the same format when developing the competences of student-athletes in dual careers, the research used seven typical scenarios faced by dual career support providers. The 512 participating support providers were then asked to identify the competences they felt were needed to overcome these scenarios. (*show scenarios on back of prompt card*) This resulted in the identification of 35 competences which are represented under six section headings.

Read the headings of the 6 sections and read some random competences from each section.

The table at the bottom of the card represents what the dual career support providers perceive as the top ten most important competences needed to facilitate dual career athletes in a suitable environment. (*Show table at bottom of card*)

Have you any questions in relation to any of the information given?

Proceed with interview questions.

Appendix J: Thematic Mapping Examples

117 Codes

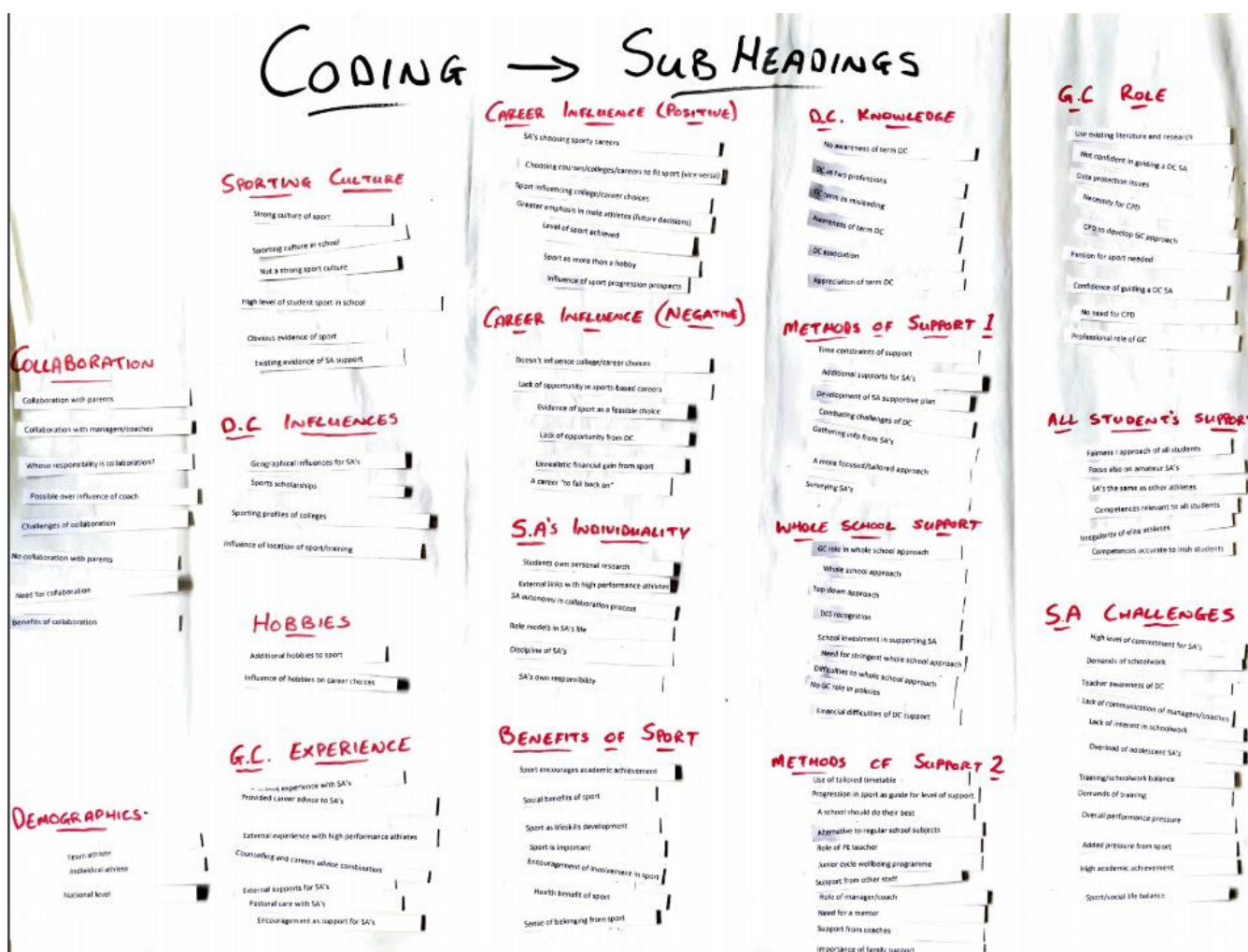
- All 117 initial codes were grouped in reference to similarity of each other.

15 Subthemes

- Each grouping was then given a name that identified with the theme of that group.

5 Themes

- The 5 main themes of the study were identified from grouping relevant subthemes together.



Subthemes created from the itemised headings:

1. The benefits that sport offers
(Benefits of sport)
2. Sport participation does influence future career decisions
(Career Influence – Positive)
3. Sport participation doesn't influence future career decisions
(Career Influence – Negative)
4. Experience and appreciation of students who balance a busy sporting life with school.
(SA Challenges)
5. Student-athletes must be responsible for themselves
(SA's Individuality)
6. Guidance Counsellor's confidence in role but acknowledgement of the benefits of CPD.
(GC Role)
7. Existing knowledge and new opinions of the term dual career
(DC Knowledge)
8. The external influences on the possibility of a dual career.
(DC Influence)
9. Guidance Counsellor's insights into possible methods of support
(Methods of support 1)
10. Guidance counsellor's existing experience in supporting student-athletes
(GC Experience)
11. The need to ensure that all students in the school are supported appropriately.
(All students support)
12. Collaboration with the relevant people involved in a student-athletes life.
(Collaboration)
13. The other methods that can help in supporting student-athletes.
(Methods of support 2)
14. The need, but challenges, of a whole school approach
(Whole school approach)
15. The sporting culture within a school has an impact
(Sporting culture)

FINAL THEMES USED

Theme 1: Guidance Counsellors' level of confidence in supporting dual career student-athletes.

Subtheme: Limited knowledge of the term dual career.

Subtheme: The benefits that CPD could offer.

Theme 2: Participation in sport has an influence on career decision making.

Subtheme: Guidance Counsellor experience with future career decision making and dual career athletes.

Theme 3: The challenges of student-athletes balancing academic and athletic lives.

Subtheme: Balancing a busy sporting life with education.

Subtheme: The individual role of the student-athlete.

Theme 4: The professional role of Guidance Counsellors when supporting student-athletes.

Subtheme: The level of support offered to dual career student-athletes.

Subtheme: Schools should provide equal support to all students.

Subtheme: The role of collaboration in supporting student-athletes.

Theme 5: A whole school approach.

Subtheme: Whole school supports offered to student-athletes.

Subtheme: Combating challenges by using a whole school approach.

Appendix K: Reflective Diary Excerpts

Pilot Interview

Friday 20th March

WHAT? → Pilot interview using Skype.

I feel that this mock interview was extremely beneficial. I had been concerned about using prompt cards over the medium of Skype but by using screen share I discovered that it can work effectively.

I also learned that some of my questions are too broad and need to become more focused.

I felt the interviewee get a little defensive when I was questioning their knowledge of dual careers.

So WHAT? →

- Skype for Business is a good platform... but remember to remind participants about recording.
- Prompt Cards worked well, but don't feel that I have to get through all of the info..... be concise with them.
- Ensure that I ~~go~~ ask the "existing knowledge" questions appropriately, not to suggest that they should know but don't know! It could create a negative tone to the interview.

Now what? →

- Rephrase Q's 4, 12, 13, 14. Be more focused with them and give examples in Q14.
- Look at prompt card script, be aware of hitting interviewees with too much info.
- Be aware of tone of Q's around existing knowledge.