

Optimizing Secondary Education Curricula for Elite Student-Athletes: A Case Study of Kazakhstan

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Abstract:

This study addresses the important problem of meeting academic requirements by young individuals who are promising athletes on their path to an elite level in professional sports. While professional athletes in the Republic of Kazakhstan become competitive in global sports, the situation with flexible and effective educational trajectories for talented youth has always been complicated. The goal of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of current teaching approaches in Kazakhstani sports boarding schools, regular secondary schools, and specialized schools for talented students.

The methodology of the research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data.

First, quantitative data from 37 schools, including general secondary schools and specialized sports boarding schools, were collected through surveys. These surveys evaluated governmental policies employed by educational institutions; curriculum flexibility provided by school administration; school support systems developed by teachers locally; and challenges in teaching student-athletes, which numerous teachers have met throughout their careers. Second, qualitative insights were obtained through interviews with key stakeholders, including education experts, coaches, and policymakers, to better understand systemic challenges and opportunities for reform. Finally, the research incorporated a comparative analysis of best practices in countries with established dual-career systems for athletes, which could be implemented in Kazakhstani context. Particular attention was paid to curriculum adaptation, individualized learning trajectories, and institutional collaboration between educational and sports organizations.

The findings of the research are expected to provide a roadmap for improving general approaches that allow student-athletes to achieve athletic excellence without failure in their academic development and future career prospects. The expected contribution of this study is to propose evidence-based recommendations for the development of secondary education programs for talented athletes in Kazakhstan, which could possibly improve both academic and athletic outcomes.

Keywords:

Dual-career, student-athletes, secondary education, Kazakhstan, sports boarding schools, educational curricula, international experience.