

## **Biodanza srt and Dual Career. Holistic approach in promoting a good student / athlete life perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This contribution introduces the Biodanza SRT System, an Innovative Methodological Training with holistic-systemic approach, capable of positively affect the person’s development through an education to Life Skills, to be integrated into specific formats to promote the students-athletes’ Dual Career and support their realization as athletes, students, and above all as competent people and valid members of society.

### **Keywords**

Dual Career, Biodanza SRT, Sports, School, Life Skills Education, Young Athlete

## Introduction

*Dual Career* defines the situation of a person at a particular moment of his life, who lives a dual path: as worker/husband-wife and as athlete/student, trying to reconcile sports career, education or work to which to add the need for a private life.

According to the definition given by the European Union, the Dual Career concept in sports consists in giving athletes the possibility to start, develop and end successfully a high level sports career, combined with the pursuing of objectives linked to education, work and important goals in the different stages of life concerning the various dimensions of personality: playing a role in society, guaranteeing a satisfactory income, nurturing one's own personal growth, developing a healthy identity and affective and social gratification (European Commission, 2012; Geraniosova & Ronkainen, 2015).

For athletes, reconciling sports career with study and/or work paths represents a considerable challenge that, in addition to requiring high levels of motivation, commitment and responsibility, requires a good development of *Life Skills*, i.e. it involves possessing the right emotional, cognitive and relational skills effective for the management of personal tools and strategies aimed at personal management.

One of the greatest difficulties faced by athletes consists precisely in developing the ability to organize positively their lives, avoiding to choose between maximizing their athletic potentialities or obtaining a kind of training that allows for the construction of employment opportunities also in their *Post Career* (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Stankovich et al. 2001).

Personal characteristics, the provenance from individual sports (more than team sports), low self-esteem and problem solving skills in the stress management, are predictive with respect to the choice of leaving sports or school career during adolescence (Thiehe, Alfermann, 2015). The inclusion of a constant training on psychosocial skills (coping strategies, empowerment, volitional skills) already during school age, together with an optimal environment for combining academic training with sports career, becomes an important resource for preventing school or sports career leaving.

The world of sports is so demanding towards professional and Olympic athletes, who often force themselves to dedicate their time exclusively to achieving excellent performance and sports career, by reducing or eliminating everything unrelated to them: education, family, and self-care. Then there are also many elite athletes who, although acclaimed at professional and Olympic level, are forced to face another reality simultaneously: that of having a *double career* or preparing for a post-athletic career. This condition stems from the need to compensate for a low or partial financial remuneration of athletes useful for their economic support, in order to allow them living and having a subsequent post-retirement contribution (Stambulova, Stephan, Japhag, 2007).

Many athletes/students experience this condition successfully, acknowledging that dual careers, although in fact mutually complementary, do not necessarily mean that they are mutually compatible. (Aquilina, 2013).

Moreover, an athlete's career, sooner or later, comes to an end, but life goes on.

Being focused on sports careers, athletes do not often think about post-career, and therefore it becomes a priority to live room for and pay proper attention to their training.

The challenge that every athlete faces during his professional career is that to combine sports career with education and work. Intense training, competition, and desire to reach high levels, make it difficult especially for young people showing promises as athletes to make the two worlds dialogue, thus athletes/students are often forced to choose between university or work and agonistic activity.

Sometimes commitment, motivation and responsibility are not enough, but there is an extreme need to develop an adequate knowledge of programs to support the *Dual Career*: the combined action between sports organizations, schools and universities to support young ath-

letes, which cannot ignore psychosocial personal prerequisites that can facilitate or constrain the ability to reconcile academic and sports commitments in the best possible way.

These interventions are of key importance especially for those athletes who have to end their path at a young age, and have their whole life ahead to reinvent themselves and develop a “second life”.

It is useful to provide information, structure programs and patterns to ensure that elite athletes study and work before the end of their sports career, in order to make them responsible and autonomous, and to be more active (Lopez de Subinana, Barriopedro, Conde, 2015 ).

In the last decade, there has been a growing interest in promoting the combination of education and elite sports commitments, i.e. the *Dual Career* (DC) of European students-athletes (Guidotti, Cortis, Capranica, 2015).

In line with the objectives of *the Europe 2020 growth strategy*, which suggests taking actions to prevent early school leaving and strengthen employment opportunities for workers, the *European Commission for Dual Career* has developed the *European Guidelines* (European Commission, 2012), concerning the recommendations of the political-educational actions aimed at empowering and raising awareness in governments, sports bodies, educational institutions and labour market to develop effectively the *Dual Career*, by providing young people with sports education and / or professional training alongside their sports training.

### **1. Education to *Life skills*: Focus of the athlete/student’s Dual Career programs between Sports and Education**

Mutual importance and close correlation must be recognized for sports and education (Isidori, 2016b).

The concept of *Dual Career* needs a rethinking of school and sport, conceiving them as educational contexts in a systemic perspective that does not separate the acquisition of technical skills and competences from the acquisition of contents implicit in human values (Zagelbaum, 2014).

Both can be considered as selected places in which to put into action educational practices designed to educate the human capital, and as instruments of the human *bildung* that contributes to developing *life-long learning* (Migliorati M., Maulini C., Isidori E. 2016).

Sports and education must always be connected and integrated to the person’s overall education, and must envisage a specific type of intelligence (*forma mentis*) and culture that is never separated from *the paideia*, understood as the knowledge resulting from the integration of all the different forms of human intelligence (Turró Ortega, 2013; Gardner, 2011).

Nowadays, helping young athletes making choices to lead and better build a specific life and work project is the new pedagogical challenge, and the new frontier of the orientation to sports in the educational policies of the most developed countries (Isidori, 2016a).

In this perspective, the focus of the intervention is the student-athlete within the relational systems of which he is part, and with which he is in a continuous relationship of direct and indirect interaction.

Education is a human right, and the athlete, as a person serving the community through sports, deserves to be helped to enjoy this right at all stages of his life (Schweiger, 2014), recognizing him also as a mediator and implementer of the educational values of sports.

The value of sports for personal growth and development is widely known and, for some years, it has also been considered as the optimal context in which to teach *Life Skills*: personal skills useful for the performance, and applied at school, in private life and relationships, in the workplace or, at the end of a career, for the ability to reinvent oneself.

It is strongly important to encourage the student-athlete to engage in school activities.

School and university are to be conceived as *permanent education laboratories* aimed at improving their well-being, amplifying their social capital, together with granting them deeper

knowledge of themselves, greater awareness of their own resources, *Life Skills acquisition*, the harmonious achievement of school and sports goals (Danish et al., 1993), their inclusion into the world of work and a gratifying affective and relational life.

Life Skills are that *set of personal and relational skills that support self-management in one's own relationship with the rest of the world, in order to positively face one's own existence*, and represent the range of basic *cognitive, emotional and relational skills* (WHO, 1992) in which the strategies of *coping, resilience and empowerment are rooted* (WHO, Ottawa Charter, 1986).

They are “*all those skills and competencies needed to learn to relate oneself with others, and to deal with everyday life problems, pressures and stresses. The lack of such socio-emotional Skills can cause, particularly in young people, the establishment of negative and high-risk behaviors, in response to stresses*”. (WHO, 1992).

By identifying in the school the ideal place for effective interventions and projects in the developmental age, the World Health Organization, in 1993, issued the document *Life Skills Education* (LSE) in Schools and, in 1994, the *Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools*.

Following the elaboration made from the “*Pan American Health Organization* “ (PAHO, 2001), the World Health Organization (1993, 2003) grouped the ten *Life Skills* into three categories:

- Emotional Area: Self-awareness (Self-awareness), Emotions Management, Stress Management:
- Relational Area: Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationships Skills, Empathy.
- Cognitive area: Decision making, Problem solving, Creative thinking (Creativity), Critical thinking

In order to teach *Life Skills* to young people, it is therefore necessary to introduce specific programs in schools, sports facilities or other places dedicated to learning. (WHO, 1992).

The development and strengthening of *Life Skills* requires an experience-based learning, “*and they can be taught to young people (and adults) as skills acquired through learning and training ... making the person capable of turning knowledge, attitudes and values into real abilities; it means knowing what to do and how to do it*”. (WHO, 1993).

*Life Skills* are the psychosocial personal, interpersonal, cognitive and physical skills that make people able to control and lead their existence, and to develop the ability to coexist in their environment, managing to modify it (WHO, 1993).

An education to *Life Skills* has the goal to develop:

- *Coping strategies* (the set of an individual's adaptive psychological mechanisms *in response to requests from the environment* (Lazarus, 1991, Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
- *Self-efficacy*: an individual's belief that he can change his experience by controlling the environment surrounding him (Bandura, 2000).
- *Locus of control*: modality according to which an individual explains events as produced by behaviors attributable to the Self (internal active control), or by external causes that do not depend on his control (Rotter, 1954).
- *Personal empowerment*: *the process by which people increase control over the events that influence their lives* (Laverack, 2007).
- *Resilience*: the ability to cope with stressful environmental events by employing personal resources, in order to reorganize one's own life situation positively (Malaguti, 2005, 2010).

An education to *Life Skills* tends to promote the individual and social development of the student-athlete, by developing a range of skills that will enable future adults to grow and change flexibly, and to be able to respond to the challenges and opportunities of life.

*Life Skills* programs should be included in the school and sports context not as an “*additional package*”, thus increasing the load to which athletes-students, teachers and coaches are sub-

jected, but as an instrument capable of enhancing the didactic-sports action, while promoting the student-athlete's psychosocial competence.

## **2. Biodanza SRT (Rolando Toro System) as a path of Psycho-Motor-Affective-Relational Coaching. The link between the School-Sports Tutoring and Counselling interventions in the athletes-student's Dual Care programs.**

From the Greek prefix *Bios*, which means "Life", and the word of French origin *Dance*, "Integrated emotional movement", thus *The Dance of Life*, the term Biodanza was coined by Rolando Toro Araneda (Chilean psychologist and anthropologist) to indicate the Biodanza SRT Pedagogical System elaborated thanks to his studies and experiences that, since 1960, have been focusing on the centrality of the body and movement as an expression of life.

Based on a *Biocentric education* (life at the center), the Biodanza SRT system finds its foundations in life sciences (biology, physiology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, neurosciences, human sciences, epigenetics), and represents a bodily mediation-based Holistic Social Pedagogy.

Biodanza SRT "*is a system of Human Integration, of organic renewal, of emotional re-education and of re-learning of the original life functions*" (Toro Araneda, 2007). By employing the principles of the *Biocentric Education*, through the languages of the body and the emotions, it wants to favor the integration between learning and cognitive knowledge by facilitating affective education, the person's global and harmonious development (Toro Araneda, 2012), *Existential* (bio-psychosocial) *rehabilitation* and *Personal Empowerment*.

Biodanza SRT is a system of personal growth and human evolution that awakens the attention to oneself, to others and to the context, to sensitivity and empathy, so as to gradually increase self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, ability to listen and the strengthening of identity, improving the well-being and the quality of personal and social life. (Rosa, De Vita 2018).

Biodanza SRT, based on experiences lived only in groups, is based on a Gestalt<sup>1</sup> generated by the interaction between music (universal language), emotional movement (natural expression of the human being) and encounter, to induce a *Vivencia*: "*the experience lived with great intensity by an individual in the present moment, which involves kinaesthesia, visceral and emotional functions*" (Toro Araneda, 2000).

By embracing the whole existence, the *Vivencia* has profound and lasting effects (*lifelong learning*), because the organism participates as a whole in the intense sensation of being alive *here and now (hic et nunc)*. Specific exercises and dances induce *Integrating Vivencias* that, with appropriate measures calibrated to the types of users, can also be offered to people with disabilities and/or *diversabilities*.

In Biodanza, realizing "one's own dance" means integrating one's own feelings with one's own actions, realizing a communion between the feelings and emotions that animate us and the visible expression of our "moving" in the world.

Corporeity is the expression of our "*existential posture*" and represents our effective "presence in the world"; it is the ideal means for learning *Life Skills* as it involves the many body dimensions: that biological, psychological, emotional, affective, expressive, relational, cognitive, social, spiritual, and personal.

Thanks to an *Innovative Methodological Training*, the Biodanza SRT System promotes and facilitates the learning of those skills and competences that are of main importance for life (*Life Skills*), since it pursues the aim of fostering the harmonious and integrated development of the human potential (*Lines of Vivencia*), fundamental in contributing to the structuring of the person's identity:

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1 \*With the term "*Gestalt*" Rolando Toro Araneda refers to the definition given by Kurt Lewin: "a system in which the parts are dynamically connected, so that the change of one part produces a change in all the others". (Toro Araneda, 2007)

- Vitality (ability to live with joy of life and vital impetus).
- Creativity (ability to regenerate oneself each day by creating one's own existence).
- Affectivity (ability to create a contact and be in a human relationship).
- Sexuality (ability to feel pleasure in living life).
- Transcendence (ability to live the relationship with all that is outside of us. With each other, with the world, with the existence and with life, and feeling part of the Universe).

Biodanza SRT aims to recover the psychophysical integration through a methodology that includes all the aspects of human movement and their correlations, using motor proposals designed and created to stimulate the ability to perceive others empathically, promote the expression of emotions positively, educate to the affectivity of gradually stimulating the whole set of human intelligences, thus contributing to a person's integrated and healthy development (Rosa, De Vita, 2018).

Through a person-centered approach in a facilitating and non-judgmental climate (with respect and attention to oneself and to the others), the Biodanza SRT Training is designed to induce people to fully and creatively live their lives by developing "functional" intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, thus favoring the indispensable prerequisites for personal and collective growth and development. (Rogers, 1980): optimistic attitude (positive vision), self-efficacy (confidence in one's own abilities), self-esteem, empathy, emotional management, empowerment (development of potentialities), and emotional management.

By acquiring a "personal power", the subject has greater self-confidence, develops his abilities and talents to the fullest by becoming the protagonist of his own growth, and thus realizing his own "*actualizing tendency*": the *Empowerment*. (Rogers, 1969).

Research outcomes (Stueck and Villegas, 2012) highlight the efficacy of Biodanza on modifying our own behavior, on stress management in emergency situations and natural disasters, on promoting a degree of serenity, optimism, autonomy, mastery of the environment in which we find ourselves, on the adoption of autonomous actions and on the establishment of positive relationships with others (Stueck, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; 2010a;2010b; 2011; Stueck, Villegas, Perche e Balzer, 2007; Stück, Villegas, Terren, Toro, Mazzarella and Schröder, 2008; Witruk, Reschke and Stueck, 2009), greater ability to "*perceive one's own individuality and, at the same time, the similarity with others, while not perceiving oneself as 'different' but as part of a group*" (Ghedin, 2016), *improved psychological well-being, reduced Stress levels and lower Alexithymia levels* (Giannelli, Giannino, Mingarelli, 2015).

The Biodanza SRT system is not contemplated as a therapy as it stimulates the *healthy part of people*, thus it does not act on symptoms, conflicts or any disturbances.

A fundamental characteristic of the Biodanza SRT system is represented by its Universality, as it is an educational method with a heterogeneous and transversal application suitable for men and women of all ages in educational, sports, mental health, socio-health, rehabilitation, business and criminal contexts. (De Vita, Rosa, 2018).

Biodanza SRT as a path of Psycho-Motor-Affective-Relational Coaching - We believe it is a further specific educational intervention to be integrated into the Dual Care programs constituted by *interactive counselling* (Zagelbaum, 2014) e *school and sports tutorship* (Casucci 2002) *formats* (which can be reproduced, with the appropriate adaptations, in different fields and in different ages) intended for student-athletes, leading to the introduction of new pedagogical approaches in training that can positively influence the development process of the athletes, of the group and its dynamics (Migliorati, Maulini, Isidori, 2016).

## Conclusions

The intentional educational choices made by teachers/trainers and the ways in which the activities are planned, organized and carried out in a coherent way are crucial for guaranteeing positive personal development in young athletes.

To guarantee the effectiveness of a design model of *Dual Career* adequate actions, it is essential to prepare *ad hoc* training paths, in order to develop that mutuality and collaboration typical of a networking.

Once recognized the need for networking, of fundamental importance are the planning of shared actions and the collaboration of all the agents in the process, the importance of new training and teaching methodologies, the integration of coordination figures to support *Dual Career paths*, in order to achieve objectives that make it possible to reconcile the sport dimension with that of study and personal life (Zagelbaum, 2014).

From experimental scientific evidence, the pedagogical models, based on a holistic approach, for the realization of a *Dual Career* path in career students/athletes, are excellent intervention strategies for the integrated development of the different dimensions concerning the person, within a framework of *a lifetime career development*. (Migliorati, Maulini, Isidori, 2016).

Therefore, design models must necessarily refer to a holistic and systemic approach that is well suited to the essence of education, which, being an organic, complex, circular, dynamic and open process, by promoting the participation of all “actors”, triggers an improvement process in all systems: in the school, sports, professional and personal ones.

Considering the *Innovative Methodological Training of the Biodanza SRT System* as a precious link in the specific school/sports tutorship and counselling format, we hope it will be integrated into the athletes-students’ *Dual Career* programs, in order to develop those psycho-social skills useful to ensure their management not only between Sports and Education, but also by contemplating everything related to private life.

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