Interindividual variability of the teaching-learning needs of student-athletes. A focus on ICT approaches

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Abstract

As sports careers are characterized by a high level of uncertainty, getting a graduation represents a real necessity for most of the athletes. Higher education institutions implement teaching-learning supports to help student-athletes dual project.

Their interest has been demonstrated (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016) as the conciliation of an academic and an athletic career poses some difficulties (Breithecker, 2018; Gomez, Bradley & Conway, 2018; Semiz, 2018).

Among the resources that are proposed, information and communication technologies (ICT) represent a promising approach. Strangely, literature is poor about that topic. This study aimed to analyse the student-athletes opinions concerning the use of ICT in order to determine if there are differences according to some of their characteristics.

Data were collected in two steps with student-athletes of the ULiege: (1) 9 of them participated to a semi-structured interview; (2) 30 agreed to answer to an online questionnaire built on the provisional data collected during the previous step.

The expectation of using ICT devices in order to meet the needs of this specific group appeared in both parts of the study. Nonetheless, a certain heterogeneity of opinions and expectations was identified. The student-athletes who have the highest expectations about ICT were generally the ones who reported more difficulties in reconciling their dual career ($.22 \geq r \leq .51$, depending on the variables taken into consideration). They have also a highest number of weekly training sessions ($.39 \geq r \leq .52$) and a higher rate of absenteeism due to participation in trainings/competitions ($.25 \geq r \leq .56$).

The interindividual variability of the student-athletes' expectations in terms of ICT underlines that an even more personalized follow-up should be implemented for them in higher education.

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