

ENDURANCE: Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport

Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship

(ENDURANCE IO2T1 Output)

Country Notes FINLAND

Introduction

This Country Note on Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship in *Finland* has been prepared by *Karelia University of Applied sciences* as an initial output within the ENDURANCE Intellectual Output 2, Task 1 “Identify common traits and links between sports and entrepreneurship”. Its aim is to provide an informed insight within the area under investigation for the next stages of the project. In addition, its purpose is to inform project stakeholders and broader audience in sports and entrepreneurship communities about first advances of the ENDURANCE project.

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Commonalities between Sports and Entrepreneurship: ENDURANCE conceptual framework



Topic 1: Individual personality traits common for sports and entrepreneurship

The review of resources on overlaps and links between sports and entrepreneurship in *Finland* yielded the following list of commonalities among the individual personality traits:

From interviews: (Liikanen 2021)

- Pressure tolerance
- The desire for success
- Receiving criticism
- The end result culminates in your own performance
- Competitiveness
- The importance of practice, things don't happen in an instant
- Taking responsibility for your own making

All interviewed athletes mentioned pressure tolerance as one of the most important personal trait. Also, their feeling that the end result correlates the effort you put in was pretty important. In other word; as much you put in as much you get out.

Desk research:

Entrepreneurship and the model of entrepreneurship can be found in growth environments, at home or by monitoring business activities of close relatives. Friend and networks have attached and promoted entrepreneurship. Responsibility and own solutions are also reflected in one's own study choices and solutions at different stages of one's own sports, study, work and entrepreneurship career. Entrepreneurship is perceived as taking responsibility for the totality of one's own doing. Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. The significance of taking responsibility comes to a concrete picture in difficult business situations and stages. Responsibility is also about flexibility, determination and getting things done. It requires tolerance. The significance becomes concretely illustrated in difficult business situations and stages. Responsibility is also about flexibility, determination and completing things, "tournament resilience" (Pekkala 2011).

According to the study, top sports and championship growth capital resources are linked to entrepreneurial growth. The interviewees feel that they have gained both conative capital and business skills to become an entrepreneur from their sports careers. In top sports and entrepreneurship, spiritual resources are used, a driving force (Pekkala 2011).

Top sports and entrepreneurship are combined with independent doing and self-motivation that characterize entrepreneurial capital (Niitamo, 2002).

It's been suggested that specific personality traits relate to entrepreneurship. That includes the need for achievement, generalised self-efficacy, innovativeness, stress tolerance, the need for autonomy, and a proactive personality. It's been also studied that top athletes' personality traits match the detected directions for entrepreneurial intention and success, and the entrepreneurship might be an appropriate second career choice for athletes (Steinbrink, S.C.Berger, Kuckertz 2019).

The skills provided by rhythmic gymnastics are realized in working life as part of good work performance. The most important skills of the sport for working life are time management, efficiency, commitment, perseverance, tolerance of disappointments, adaptability to change, ability to work long hours, managing many things at once, taking care of oneself as required by the situation and ergonomic skills. Based on the interviews, the development of working life skills is most influenced by

the quality of the coaching process, the coach's activities and the duration of the team's composition (Lepistö, 2019).

Athletes and coaches point out that the skills gained from a career can be utilized later in working life. The coaches named them useful in their own working lives: physical ability, schedule management, performance, courage, internationality, use of foreign languages, systematicness, diligence and hard work. Athletes could not name the way through which they would utilize their abilities. This is probably due to the fact that athletes do not yet have experience of working life (Lepistö 2019).

Topic 2: Other individual-level fostering factors

The review of resources in *Finland* yielded the following list of fostering factors strengthening the link between sports and entrepreneurship from among the other individual-level aspects:

From interviews: (Liikanen 2021)

- Passion for doing your own thing
- Family business
- Having few potential customers even before starting the business
- All of the partners have educational background that has been acquired during the sports career, Bachelor of Business Administration, Master of arts, Vocational Qualification in Business and Administration and Software engineer
- Possibility to work as entrepreneur during sports career

If one's parents were entrepreneurs it seems much certain that person will continue his professional career as an entrepreneur. All interviewed athletes have educational background, which has strengthen their certain professional skills important for the line of business they are doing.

Desk research:

Lack of jobs that with your visions, values and business idea. Entrepreneurship is seeking and finding solutions. It allows you to plan your schedule and execute your own vision. One factor in achieving a championship is practice. That is a prerequisite for growth. Athlete's capital is a talent to practice. (Pekkala 2011) The existence of a successful role model or an idea that interest people in advance encourages entrepreneurship efforts (Yrittäjät 2021).

Sport teaches extreme commitment and responsibility, as the athlete is ultimately responsible for the course of his own story. Setting and brightening long- and short-term goals is as common as brushing your teeth. Top athletes are masters in organization and time management due to the 24/7 nature of the sport (Kämäräinen 2016).

There will certainly be all sorts of challenges and delays on the athlete's path, and they will teach humility and the skills to deal with adversity. The snow comes into the room at some point so that the tractor can be loaded off and even then not the work pants on and off. Every top athlete realizes how hard the word perseverance is in life. Public profession, and external and internal pressures also ensure that pressure resistance develops unnoticed (Kämäräinen 2016).

Sport has been described as entrepreneurial-style work and entrepreneurship as doing entrepreneurial work. Entrepreneurship has its roots in the patterns of doing, even if the athlete has not grown up in an actual family business environment. Models of entrepreneurship have come from

networks created through local environments or through sport. They have grown through capital factors, know-how, or network resources produced by elite sports. Corporate ideas have emerged as masters of growth by leveraging capital resources (Pekkala 2011).

Topic 3: External supporting & triggering factors

The review of resources in *Finland* yielded the following list of external supporting and triggering factors that enhance the commonalities and foster pathways between sports and entrepreneurship:

From interviews: (Liikanen 2021)

- *“The athlete is already, in his own way, an entrepreneur who has to take care of many of the same things as an entrepreneur. Many of the characteristics of sport are well suited for entrepreneurship”.*
- Startup grant gross/social benefit granted by a Employment and Economic Development Centre on certain conditions to a startup entrepreneur in order to support his/her living costs during the initial phase of the enterprise
- Growing up in entrepreneurial family

When society thinks positively about entrepreneurship, it is much easier to proceed. When one knows that there is startup help available (both money and advices) from government, it eases the decision to become an entrepreneur.

Desk research:

Circumstances, incentives and opportunity factors influence the emergence of entrepreneurship. Circumstances include the fact that a company that exactly matches its own vision, values and business idea has not been found as its own workplace or partnership, which has tuned its own business idea. Networks are a factor in the construction and exploitation of which entrepreneurship requires. Networks encourage self-employment. Entrepreneurship is about finding and finding solutions. It allows you to plan your own schedule. Combining a sports career and entrepreneurship is possible (Pekkala 2011).

Culture is important in any discussion of entrepreneurship because it determines the attitude of individuals towards the initiation of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs has been described consistently using terms such as innovative, holistic, risk-taker and co-ordinating ways of behaviourist. Certain cultural institutions may facilitate, or hinder, entry into entrepreneurship. Clearly athletes grow in such an environment that makes them favourable as entrepreneurs (Morrison 2000).

In Finland it is generally recommended to study and develop yourself. To make this easier for athletes that uses a lot of time practising their own sport, there are lines of study just for athletes. We have sports academy that supports athletes from junior high school to university (Urhea 2021). Soccer player society advertises study opportunity for athletes with business idea (Jalkapallon pelaajayhdistys 2021). There is also a line for ice hockey players that plays in highest levels in Finland or abroad (Haaga-Helia 2021).

Unfortunately sports itself is not acknowledged as career. Luckily there is Sport Fund that educates athletes. They have athlete entrepreneur development program where athletes are trained to make use of know-how accumulated during and after sports career (Sport Fund 2021).

Topic 4: Pedagogical approaches and education

The review of resources in *Finland* yielded the following main findings on pedagogical approaches and education that develop and capitalize upon the commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship:

From interviews: (Liikanen 2021)

- Discussion events organized by Employment and Economic Development Centre
- Different kinds of courses which focuses on specific areas of Entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneur friends gives general tips for entrepreneurship and business planning
- Biggest gap in terms of educational content is customer acquisition and marketing

Desk research:

Athletes need help to become entrepreneurs. They could benefit from appropriate courses in different aspects of entrepreneurship, for example marketing and management. The good way to help them would also be to arrange support groups where they could discuss about problems and ask help.

It has to take in consideration that there are differences in learning needs and styles for example because the athletes have different levels of education that ranged from post-secondary level to master's degrees in diverse disciplines (Kenny 2014).

In Finland we have several opportunities to study entrepreneurship during and after sports career. It is possible to customize your studies in a way that it doesn't disturb your sports training and competing (Haaga-Helia 2021). It is possible to study polytechnic studies and vocational school studies. Vocational school studies focus more on sport entrepreneurship and polytechnic studies are more comprehensive (Pajulahti 2021, Vierumäki 2021, Haaga-Helia 2021).

Formal education is an important career factor in post-peak sports employment. Finnish business and working life require a formal educational background. It is necessary for a top-level athlete to reflect on their skills and strengths also in terms of working life and to learn to utilize what has been learned in a sports career. Achieved learning and strengths during sport career are sometimes hidden in unnecessary modesty. Education, especially business studies, has supported entrepreneurship. Education is expected to stimulate strengths, innovation, entrepreneurial activity and opportunity factors - directing energy and activity towards entrepreneurship (Pekkala 2011).

Education, especially business studies, has supported entrepreneurship. The basic factor, however, is that entrepreneurship is perceived as just the kind of work that interviewees want to do. Entrepreneurship education enables and supports entrepreneurship - knowledge and practices related to entrepreneurship. Encouragement in education, entrepreneurship, interdependence of theory and practice contribute. Good examples of these are the pre-incubator activities of entrepreneurship and the interdisciplinarity of entrepreneurship education. Education requires the encouragement of strengths, innovation, entrepreneurial activity and opportunity factors - directing energy and activity towards entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship experiences and attitudes that nurture and train entrepreneurship. With entrepreneurship, you learn things by finding out, researching and doing things (Pekkala 2011).

Topic 5: Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact

The review of resources in *Finland* yielded the following list of findings on how commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship have potential to create social impact:

From interviews: (Liikanen 2021)

- Entrepreneurship creates jobs to others
- Every entrepreneur works in a field that provides services to others in need
- Every entrepreneur pays taxes that benefits everyone in our country
- Sport brings a lot of people together and it is good channel to make an impact, for example Black lives matter, Pride and gender pay gap. This is possible even after sports career, because athletes are well respected.
- Finnish athletes want to be good role model for especially young people. When athlete or team is successful, it increases the number of amateurs and thereby affects for example our public health.

Social impacts are well recognized among the entrepreneurs. For example, it is important to pay taxes precisely to Finland, even though some bigger companies don't do that. Athletes are well respected people, so it is easier to impact in social level.

Desk research:

Sport describes the society of its time. The results of the study show a positive association between participation in organized sports and social activity in later life. Even short-term participation in childhood and adolescence promote social activism. Positive attitude and activity would seem to be very permanent (Pekkala 2011).

For decades, top athletes have taken a stand on political and social issues. Active participation in the debate and raising even difficult issues has been the rule rather than the exception. Athletes use their publicity value for non-commercial purposes. In Finland, the situation is almost the opposite. Only a few top Finnish athletes want - or dare - to talk about something other than sports in public (Paasi 2018).

Finland is a small country where sports circles are small. Everyone is somehow interdependent. - And then sometimes it is thought that it is better not to say anything, because saying can harm oneself or even a larger group (Paasi 2018).

Sport is a universal language as it transcends geographic, time and cultural conditions. It links people together who share a common interest by behaving in an entrepreneurial manner. This has led to sport being used as an entrepreneurial mechanism to promote peace, stop wars and build a better global society. The growth of investment capital funding international sports teams and events has led to athletes playing a larger role in the development of related business activity. Many athletes have become integrated into the success of their team or sports related business by being entrepreneurial and widening their global appeal through sponsorship deals (Ratten 2015).

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