

A Theory of Transition in Sports Career

Teorie přechodových fází v průběhu sportovní kariéry

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Abstract

The article is oriented on explanation of the theoretical framework of the transition theory. The origin of this theory, terminology development and approaches how to adapt to it in practice are presented. Three basic approaches are developed in research and practice: a) a drop-out phenomenon between stages, b) a stage of involution and dual career, c) a long-term talent development. The acceptance of biodromal and holistic approach are stressed which means that the principles of sports training should be accompanied with the perception of importance of a social environment (parents, coaches, peers, sports club policy). A classic model of the theory consists of four developmental stages with typical markers in each stage (from early childhood up to the period of involution). The theory can be applied in both recreational participation in one's daily life-span development, and in the sports talent development and professional sports career including the stage of involution.

Abstrakt

Článek se zaměřuje na výklad teoretického rámce teorie přechodových fází ve sportovní kariéře. Poukazuje se na původ teorie, vývoj jejích termínů a přístupů, jak ji přizpůsobovat praxi. Ve výzkumu a praxi se rozvíjely tři základní přístupy: a) fenomén „odpadávání“ či zanechávání sportu mezi jednotlivými etapami, b) etapa involuce a duální kariéra, c) dlouhodobý rozvoj talent. Zdůrazňován je biodromální a holistický přístup, což znamená, že principy sportovního tréninku mají být doprovázeny vnímáním důležitosti sociálního prostředí (rodiče, vrstevníci, politika sportovního klubu). Klasický model teorie přechodů sestává ze čtyř vývojových etap, z nichž každá má své typické znaky (od raného dětství až po etapu involuce). Teorii lze uplatňovat jak v podmínkách rekreačního sportu v dením životě každého jednotlivce, ve vývoji sportovně nadaných i v profesionální kariéře včetně etapy involuce.

Keywords: *biodromal approach, life span, sports career, structure of motivation stages*

Klíčová slova: *biodromální přístup, životní průběh, sportovní kariéra, struktura motivačních etap*

INTRODUCTION

The process of an athlete's life-long development from their beginning in childhood to a peak and a subsequent end of their career goes through life stages. The Association of Sports Psychologists of the Czech Republic aimed at highlighting the fact that a sport career is related to the previous developmental stages, and formulated the main areas of the conference: SPORT – a life guide or from cradle to grave.

Considerations on a biodromal approach or on a concept of one's "life course", i.e. that a respect to a long-term, long-life development can be a guide to a mature sport career and also a balanced, mature life when the career is over, can be found in Bednář (2009), Dudová (2011), Hoffmannová and Válková (2012). This concept is encompassed in the "theory of transition" which, using different wording, turns out in the theory of sports training. Authors such as Choutka a Dovalil (1987, 1991), Zahradník a Korvas (2012) write about the stages of:

- a sport early preparation / getting to know a sports training
- fundamental training / basic sports training,
- specialized training / special sports training,
- maximum sport performance training / elite sport training

This conception emphasizes a physiological and skill side of the training preparation. However there is little continuity in this concept associated with psycho-social personality development which contributes to a long-term motivation and an ability of self-control, which as a secondary effect, helps to make full use of that physiological and skill side of the training preparation. The stage after the end of one's elite sports career is missing at all.

Historical origins of the life-long development can be found as early as in the first textbook of psychology of sports in 1962 (Stránský, 1962, 8-9). It formulates the following stages: A. Initial stage, B. A stage of specialization, C. Stage of mastery retaining. He is underlining positive attitudes to sports activities and personal motivation.

Further on authors such as Hošek a Vaněk introduced their theory of four stages of a development of a motivational structure and as the first they pointed out to a stage of involution as early as in 1975 (Hošek & Vaněk, 1975). Later on this foundation emphasizing a psycho-social personality development has been rephrased many times pointing out to certain aspects such as:

- age strategy,
- training period strategy,
- continuous stages - phases,
- the development of the motivation structure,
- talent development,
- sports career development, etc.

Similar Canadian Long Term Athlete Development proposed model includes these main phases:

1. Fundamental
2. Learning the Skills
3. Training to Train
4. Training to Compete
5. Striving to Win

(www.ltad.com)

BACKGROUND OF THE THEORY OF TRANSITION - CLASSICAL APPROACH

The presented term "transition period" (originally from Ericsson, 1993) was used firstly for the period between the top sportsmen performance stage and his/her sports retirement stage. The origin of the principle of the theory came from the last century and it was presented by Czech authors, Vaněk and Hošek in 1975. The concept from the 1970s was explained as the developmental phases of motivation during a sports career. Their theory was founded on three sources: a) Madson's theory (Madson, 1972), b) the theory of "Ustanovka" (Puni, 1969 and Uznadze, 1961 in Vaněk & Hošek, 1972) as the potential of activity and regulation, and c) Atkinson's theory of the "need for achievement" (Atkinson & Feather, 1966). The authors stressed a developmental approach. The terminology of the four developmental phases was presented at the FEPSAC conference (Hošek & Vaněk 1975), as 1. generalization; 2. differentiation; 3. stabilization; 4. involution. During the next several years they changed the terminology to: 1. primary (spontaneous)

expansion, equal “early intervention for a sports career”; 2. selective self-inclusion; 3. stabilization; 4. involution.

More detailed explanation respected:

- age,
 - level of performance (beginners, masters, top achievers),
 - type of motivation (intrinsic, primary, secondary),
 - role of social environment as: parents, teachers/coaches, peers, clubs – government support.
- Parents role and social environment seem to be very important for the future development in life-span career. Not only for sports career but even for daily life career, particularly in the stage of involution. The transition markers between stages are crucial for drop-out or go-on in sports career.

Classical model of 4 stages of life-span sports development (Vaněk & Hošek, 1975) is explained here:

1st Stage – primary expansion (early intervention)

<i>Age</i>	<i>up to 10 years</i>
<i>Activities spectrum</i>	<i>all-round, majority of deliberate play</i>
<i>Performance</i>	<i>low, beginners discovering the potential of activity</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	<i>primary, based on need for motion, affiliation, fun and joy</i>
<i>Function of educator</i>	<i>early sports socialization, attitudes towards physical activity, basic principles of skills</i>

2nd Stage – selective self-inclusion

<i>Age</i>	<i>youth/adolescent</i>
<i>Activities spectrum</i>	<i>sports specialization, deliberate practice, training</i>
<i>Performance</i>	<i>middle (1st selection)</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	<i>primary mixed with secondary (expectation of awards, advantages)</i>
<i>Function of educator</i>	<i>“Lucky with coach”</i>

Stage 3rd – stabilization

<i>Age</i>	<i>adults</i>
<i>Activities spectrum</i>	<i>specialization</i>
<i>Performance</i>	<i>high/super</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	<i>secondary, linked with external markers, economy and media attention</i>
<i>Function of educator</i>	<i>maintaining on top level position, team building</i>

4th Stage – involution

<i>Age</i>	<i>higher adulthood</i>
<i>Activities spectrum</i>	<i>specialization</i>
<i>Performance</i>	<i>mature</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	<i>primary, linked with joy</i>
<i>Function of educator</i>	<i>team harmonization, phenomenon of ambassadorship behaviour as a model for children, teenagers</i>

THEORY OF TRANSITION - VARIOUS APPROACHES

Recently, the classical model of “the Transition Theory” has been applied and accepted in respect of any periods/stages of sports career development. Three basic approaches are developer in research and practice: a) drop-out phenomenon between stages, b) stage of involution and dual career, c) long term talent development (see articles from the conference).

Wylleman and others (Lavallo & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2014; Wyleman et al., 1993; Wylleman, 2005) worked on the topic “career development” since the 1990s up to the present time. They have been oriented mostly on drop-out phenomenon between development and mastery stage. Transition model can be applied in paralympic sport when individuals starts with sports after injury even in late age after injury (Kälbli, 2008; Valkova, 2017 in press; Vute, 2004; Wu & Williams, 2001).

Previous studies of talent developmental stages included other talent dimensions (e.g. Bloom 1985; Ericsson, 1993). One of the questions was: how many hours, how long time is necessary to spend with exercising before top performance period? What time is available in youth age, in adults age? Côté, et al. (2003) summarized the discussion with dividing “training” into deliberate play – deliberate practice and used terminology for stages of development: sampling years – specializing years – investment years.

Sampling years (with accent on deliberate play) are important from the point of view “intrinsic motivation”. Very early deliberate practice reduces intrinsic motivation.

Early intrinsically motivating behaviors (deliberate play) will have a positive effect over time on overall motivation, willingness to engage in more externally controlled activities (deliberate practice) in future. Early specialization, early high structured training with external control can lead to early losing interest and burnout among youth in sports. Deliberate play is the most important activity to keep young children motivated and to help them learn basic sport skills.

Parents role is important during all stages of sports career development, parents play important role, particularly in the early years of professionalism, it means: early stages of participating in sports (new experience, providing positive environment and attention to children interests, NO stress and searching for achievements). During the transition from junior to senior sports (e.g. for football there is age between 16–18 years) parents support is oriented on future career opportunity, new lifestyle, financial support, assisting with diet and nutritional needs, etc. Parents role is very often find even in the stage of “sports retirement” (Gibson, 2002). His terminology of stages: Early stage – transition stage to seniors – retirement stage.

Régnier, G., Salmella, J. & Russell, S. J. (1993, p. 296) agree with necessity of developmental approach in talent detection and next formation. They accept “holistic approach” – importance of “intrinsic” drive of individual as well as environmental and social factors. They presented Bloom’s report (1985) about talent development (of athletes as well as concert pianists, sculptors, mathematicians, etc.) which he formulated in three career phases: initiation, development, perfection in relation with the role of performer, mentor and parents.

Table 1: Summary of approaches towards sports career development

Year of origin	Author/s	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
1980	Sports training approach	Pre-training + Basic training	Specialized training	Top sports training	
1962	Stránský	Initial	Specialization	Maintaining mastery	
1975	Hošek and Vaněk	Generalization	Differentiation	Stabilization	Involution
1980	Hošek et al.	Primary- spontaneous expansion	Selective self-inclusion	Stabilization	Involution
1985	Bloom	Initiation	Development	Perfection	
1992 1999 2001	Vallerand et al.	Motivational continuum			
2002	Gibson	Early	Transition to seniors		Retirement
2003	Côté, Baker & Abernethy	Sampling years	Specializing years	Investment years	
2004	Stratton, Reilly, Williams & Richardson	Trust, autonomy, experience	Competence	Identity	
1993 2005 2004 2015	Wylemann & Lavalée, Stambulova, et al.	Initiation	Development	Mastery	Discontinuation
	LTAD Canadian Model	1. Fundamental + 2. Learning the Skills	3. Training to Train + 4. Training to Compete	5. Striving to Win	

CONCLUSION

Theoretical framework of the transition theory can be summarized in the next points:

1. Different terminology with similar content has been used and accepted.
2. “Fresh” terminology is usually based on old experience and previous findings, but the principles are the same (biodromal and holistic approach).
3. Theory of transition (sports career stages, development of motivation, talent development) through sport career is accepted by a lot of authors (from late 60ies up to recent time): classical model consists from 4 stages in which attention is paid not only to development of fitness or skills but motivation, importance of a social environment (parents, coaches, peers, sports club policy).
4. The theory can be used for both future sports professional career and daily life physical activity for wellbeing, even for persons after injury, potential Paralympians.
5. Acceptance of the theory drop-out phenomenon as well as going-on sports career including talent cultivation should be explained.

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