

Coach migration in German high performance sport

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Aim of paper and research question

The aim of this study is to examine the determinants of labor migration among high performance coaches. The term labor migration includes migration to another country, immigration, and migration to another job outside of the coaching field. Coach migration in high performance sports is a concern in Germany (Gienger, 2008) and is, therefore, on the agenda of the German Parliament (2014).

Theoretical background and literature review

Previous research examining labor migration has focused on athletes in professional team sports (for an overview see Maguire & Falcous, 2011; Elliott & Maguire, 2008). A few studies investigated labor migration of coaches: while Taylor (2010) looked at migratory patterns and networks of coaches in professional soccer, Borges et al. (2015) analyzed the recruitment, motivation, and perceived experiences of coaches abroad. The determinants of actual migration decisions have not yet been examined. From a theoretical viewpoint, labor migration of coaches in high performance sport can be explained by the push-pull framework (Daugeliene, 2007; Xu et al., 2015). The current situation of a coach in terms of working conditions and family situation can potentially represent a push factor, while the expected situation in a new country or in a new job reflects a pull factor.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

An online survey of high performance coaches currently employed in Germany or previously trained in Germany was conducted between January 28th and March 7th, 2016. In Germany, high performance sport is funded by the federal government, while the state and local governments subsidize community sport clubs. This funding is directed at less commercialized sports such as those sports which are typically on the Olympic Games program such as track and field, swimming, apparatus gymnastics, rowing, canoe, judo, alpine and cross country skiing, Nordic combined, bob sleigh, speed skating etc. (i.e., more commercialized and financially strong sports like professional soccer, tennis, and boxing are excluded from federal funding and also from this study). This means that in Germany, all high performance coaches in less commercialized sports are at least partially financed by the federal government. The survey link was distributed via the Coaching Academy in Cologne and the German Olympic Sports Confederation who forwarded it to the national sport organizations and Olympic training bases. The survey included a filter question at the beginning ensuring that only coaches who have been at least partially financed by the federal government between 2000 and 2016 take part in the survey to ensure that only high performance coaches complete the survey. Altogether, 225 coaches completed the survey. During the data cleaning, 21 coaches had to be removed leading to a final sample of 204 coaches. According to the Federal Office of Administration (2015), there were 672 high performance coaches in Germany in 2014, of which approximately one third have completed the survey. The questionnaire included 38

questions about coach characteristics (age, experience, qualifications, former athlete, children etc.) and the characteristics of the different types of jobs the coaches had between 2000 and 2016 (contract length, working time, income, sporting success etc.). This information was used to create a coach-year panel over the 17-year-period assessed in the survey (n=2,974). Logistic regression models were used to estimate the effects of coach and job characteristics on migration to another country, another job, and immigration.

Results and discussion

Altogether, coaches from 34 different sports including the ones listed above were surveyed and 87.7% of the coaches were male. The average age was 45.8 years (SD: 9.80) and coaches had on average 18 years of experience as a coach. In addition to having been an athlete in the sport themselves (70.6 %), the coaches reported various formal coaching qualifications including A-, B-, and C-licenses, coaching diplomas, sport science degrees, and other sport-specific licenses and certificates. Initial regression results show that a prospect of higher income increases the likelihood of migration significantly, which thus represents a pull factor. The current income negatively affects the migration probability, i.e., coaches earning less in their current job are more likely to migrate. These effects were observed in both the emigration and immigration model. Males were more likely to emigrate than females, probably because females also have family responsibilities. Also, individuals holding a sports science degree seem to be more likely to emigrate from Germany compared to those not having this type of degree, thus representing a push factor. Interestingly, such an effect could not be observed within the immigration model.

References (selected)

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