

THE IMPACT OF SPORT ON EMPLOYABILITY

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

Aim

The potential impact of employability programmes on developing skills to gain the first job is an under-explored area. This paper provides evidence on the impact of engagement in sport on employability from the perspectives of young people, employers and sport federations. Our literature search found there is a clear lack of material which explores explicitly the role of sport in developing employability. Some attention has been paid to the influence of extra-curricular activity on academic achievement demonstrating that extra-curricular activity can be positively linked to high achievement, and that in particular students who participate are often more productive, through developing good time management skills. There is relatively little research into the influence of sport consumption on the chosen occupations.

Context

Significant work has been undertaken in the last decade to articulate the potential value and impact of engagement in sport to a whole range of policy priorities. In terms of education the focus has largely been on the relationship between sports participation and school based educational performance and the role of sport volunteering in lifelong learning. Definitions of employability have become increasingly complex and have developed beyond simply being skills for employment to incorporate additional factors, including the development of values, behaviours, attitudes and competencies aimed at supporting career development. Some academics have looked at the impact of participation on earnings, for example Eide and Ronan (2001) found that participation in varsity sports in the United States had a positive impact upon

future earnings - a finding replicated on a smaller scale in the UK by Tchibozo (2007). The workforce, the community and the economy can benefit from an higher employability in jobless and first occupation classes. Previous research has acknowledged the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge of volunteers (Gratton & Preuss, 2008), but has not explicitly considered if these are transferable to the employment.. Three employment-related legacies that could benefit workplace organisations are (Dickson & Smith, 2014):

- self-perceived employability, an individual's ability to keep their job or secure a new one;
- learning orientation, employee's own efforts to create and use knowledge;
- innovative behaviour, employees enact change and improvement without the consent or knowledge of managers or those formally responsible for innovation)

Methodology

The research used a mixed methods approach which included: secondary analysis of two datasets relating directly or indirectly to sport employment (Istat and Coni reports); and primary research with three key coaches, vocation education and National Sport Federations (NSFs). The research achieved responses from 30 NSFs (20 of them Olympic Federations) via an online survey and 14 Vocational Education and Training (VET) managers interviewed in person. The outputs from the various components of the research were used to triangulate the overall findings and conclusions. From a theoretical perspective we were interested in identifying if there was a causal link between engagement in sport and employability and in the direction of any causality.

Results

A first analysis of the results shows that some federations have a large number of "beginner" coaches. This trend does not follow the paradigm of pyramidal distribution of the number of coaches and has no direct relations with the number of medal. The sports activities more choices are sports related to tourism, media power and fitness. Different factors determine the choices: young people see NSFs VET as a first opportunity of income, almost never as future job choice. In federations with many coaches often is part time job. We can conclude that sport sector develops employment in a limited way but can be a useful tool in the transition from school to work, integration of income, and just in a few cases a full time job. Research has shown many gaps in the analysis of the labor market in sport, the lack of a clear definition of employment in the laws and the volunteers' sector dangerously close to the illegal work.

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