

Sport Governance And Policy

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Coaches' Migration: Brain Drain Or Competitive Advantage?

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Aim

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors of labour migration among elite sport coaches. In this exploratory study, we seek to capture the positive and negative aspects for NFSs of their individual migration context, what their individual perceptions are of the social, economic, cultural and personal factors affecting their professional careers in the context of migration. Specifically factors influencing the migration probability are investigated in the context of elite sport in Italy.

Theoretical background

The majority of research on sport migration has focused on athletes and much less research attention has been given to coaches (Carter, 2011). Examining coaches is relevant for two related reasons. First, coaches are largely responsible for the recruitment of athletes and other coaching staff (Carter, 2011; Elliot & Maguire, 2011; Maguire & Falcous, 2011), which means they influence directly the migration of other sport stakeholders. Coaches are often the link between the athletes and the club managers who deal with their contracts and other bureaucracy. This shows that they are very aware of the challenges posed by migrating athletes. Second, coaches are often migrants themselves. As with other stakeholders coaches are recruited, have their motivations to migrate and their migration experiences.

Methodology

To examine the migration factors of coaches primary data were collected using an online survey of elite sport coaches. Elite sport Italian coaches in various Olympic (volleyball, triathlon, fencing, sailing, modern pentathlon, swimming, boxing, pesistica, cycling, climbing, ice skating, canoeing) and non-Olympic (kick-boxing and karate) sports participated in an online survey (n = 77, males, age average 42 — st. dev. 5) where they were asked for their current situation and their migration probability contingent on a hypothetical coaching position opening in 5 migration scenarios.

Results

In conclusion, the coaches who participated in this exploratory study concurred that migration has benefited them at a professional and personal level. However, they also point out serious difficulties encountered in the host countries which pose as negative aspects of their experience. One prominent result was the focus that coaches placed on their professional lives which diminished the emphasis they placed on other issues such as family and language. We believe that future research should investigate this further either by using quantitative methods on larger samples, or by interviewing another sample of coaches questioning these topics specifically. Another interesting result was the use of networks in the recruitment process. They appeared as an important recruitment mechanism and therefore, it would be useful to understand these networks in greater detail. It would be important, for instance, analysing to what extent networks are built on first-hand relationships or through a network of second- or third-hand relationships. Finally, given the pervasiveness of coaches' migration, it would be interesting to examine if and how coaching education programmes prepare coaches for migration and whether those are effective in fostering their success. By understanding the difference between first and second relationships give us an idea about personal skills and settled systems made to host foreigner coaches. The present study adds to the body of literature on labour migration in sport by shedding light on an under-researched area that is elite sport coaches.

References

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