

International Experience as a Career Development Factor for Football Managers in Poland

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Aim

The research on labour market for sports managers in Poland is very limited. Still, the ongoing processes of professionalization, commercialization, and internationalization of the Polish sports call for more focus on the development of competencies and career paths of people who are in charge of the industry. One of the most under-researched issues of career development of the Polish sport managers is their internationalization. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the role of foreign experience in sport management (volunteering, internships, jobs) for the carriers of football managers in Poland. The research is focused on football, as this is the most commercialized and professionalized sport in Poland.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Despite almost 30 years of Polish political and economic transformation, the transition of the sport system is not accomplished (Starakiewicz & Kubów, 2014). There are still many sport organisations and federations run by people used to socialist conditions who have difficulty in finding their way in a new reality with limited public subventions, and rising alternatives to sport participation (Gulan, 2012). They are rather sport activists than sport managers. The emergence of sport manager profession is only progressive in Poland, as is the development of the university curriculums for them (Chelmecki & Zysko, 2008), and academic research on their role in sport organisations (Seweryniak & Stosik, 2013) or competencies needed (Gulan, 2012). The only research on the career path of sport managers in Poland concerns uniquely the entry to the profession (Gulan 2012).

However, the lack of research on international experience on career paths of sport managers is not only the Polish characteristics. Still, human capital theory predicts that in general international experience generates valuable learning with a positive impact on employee's careers (Benson & Pattie, 2008). And even though more research is needed to strongly affirm this claim, some studies find a clear positive correlation (ex. Suutari, Brewster, Makela, Dickmann, & Tornikoski, 2018).

Research Design and Data Analysis

Research process consists of two stages. First, an analysis of Polish football managers' career paths in their profiles available on LinkedIn (international online professional network site), and Goldenline (a Polish equivalent of LinkedIn) is done to estimate the scale and forms of the phenomena, and to identify managers with international experience. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 10 of them. A multi-case study is chosen as the research is exploratory in nature.

Results and Discussion

The research is not completed yet. The full results will be available by the time of the conference. The initial findings indicate a very small scale of international experience of Polish football managers, and a subjective importance of this experience for competency development of those few managers. Yet, they don't consider this advantage decisive for their past or current employment. This may be explained by a low openness of the community,

where the key is the social capital. However, the decreasing unemployment and fast developing economy are changing the labour market situation also in the sport industry, which is observed in growing number of public job announcements in professional football in the last two years. This phenomenon increases chances of a more competency-based recruitment process, and thus a foreign work experience may get more valuable for employers in future.

Conclusion and Implications

Given the expected further professionalization and financial growth of Polish football, there is an obvious need for knowledge and competency transfer into the sector from abroad. As there is hardly any presence of foreign football managers in Poland, international experience of Polish managers appears to be a valuable solution to this end. Still, at present, this experience seems to be of more value for managers themselves than for their employers. An envisioned practical contribution of this study is to highlight the benefits of international work experience to the development of professional football in Poland and to determine the types of foreign experiences particularly relevant in the market for football sport managers. The research contribution of the study is to verify the potential of the applied research design for a larger scale multisport and/or multinational study.

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