

Internationalization of the Sport Management Labor Market and Curriculum Perspectives: Insights From Germany, Norway, and Spain

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This study applies “Europeanness” to the analysis of internationalization in the sport management labor market and which changes this trend necessitates for sport management curricula. The authors employed an analysis of 30 semistructured interviews with key informants from Germany, Norway, and Spain. The results reveal various effects of internationalization on the sport sector and highlight the richness and diversity in the three countries. Sport management graduates need to possess a diverse set of competencies for successfully starting their careers. In addition to subject-specific knowledge, generic competencies such as the ability to work in a team, being able to communicate in diverse languages, and having intercultural skills are important. The article discusses knowledge of international sport organizations, their governance, global trends, and intercultural and language competencies, as well as international sport event management as identified themes and proposes specific curriculum changes to promote educational outcomes of sport management programs.

Keywords: competencies, curriculum development, higher education, sport sector, thematic analysis

Globalization and internationalization affect industries across all fields and sectors.¹ Danylchuk, Doherty, Nicholson, and Stewart (2008) refer to the sport industry as the “global sport village” (p. 126). The labor market in sport management is growing and changing, promoted by commercialization, digitalization, and internationalization of the sport market (Mathner & Martin, 2012). With this evolution, the needs for and expectations of sport managers from the labor market have also changed.

Higher education institutions need to prepare graduates adequately for the labor market (European Commission, 2019a; Kultusministerkonferenz, 2000), and deal with these global changes. Danylchuk et al. (2008) explain: “sport management educators have a responsibility to provide students with the insight and tools to be successful in this international industry” (p. 127). For European countries, the Bologna Process calls for a close communication between employers and higher education to better prepare students (European Commission, 2019a).

This study examines the effects of internationalization on the sport management labor market. The aim is to better understand how this internationalization necessitates changes in sport management curricula by examining the following research question: *How does the internationalization of the European sport sectors necessitate changes in sport management curricula?*

Inspired by the work of Breitbarth, Walzel, and van Eekeren (2019), the article applies a European perspective, especially given that sport management scholarship is largely dominated by North American and Anglo-Saxon influence. In this context, Breitbarth et al. (2019, p. 3) ask the question “whether reasoning, theorization and managerial implications [can] be appropriate and ambitious if ‘Europeanness’ [. . .] is overlooked, either due to lack of awareness, interest or research skill.” Europe presents a distinct geographic, cultural, political, and intellectual space, all of which affects sport management scholarship. There are different sport structures and cultures, different levels of professionalization and commercialization, and differing levels of amateur and professional sport as well as public and nonprofit organizations. Dissimilar to the organization of sport in North America:

the dominant European sports model was inherently built on non-profit organizations and, therefore, most are expected to consider trade-offs and to serve not only their members or financiers, but also create values for various other stakeholders in their immediate environment, such as local authorities and fans, and their wider environment, such as the media and the general public. (Breitbarth et al., 2019, p. 7)

The contemporary sport system in Europe mainly involves four sectors with varying roles, depending on the country: public sector, sport organizations and confederations, sport clubs, and private sector. Therefore, a culturally embedded and context-specific research approach (Breitbarth et al., 2019; Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020) is necessary for the investigation of needed changes for sport management curricula induced by internationalization on the European sport labor market. Germany, Norway, and Spain are able to represent Europe from a geographical point of

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view from the North (Norway), through the Middle (Germany) to the South (Spain). Moreover, the historical, political, and cultural similarities and differences make these three important countries a good representation of Europeanness and its diversity in a sport context.

The study aimed at identifying recommendations for higher education institutions so that they may better prepare sport management students for work in a global industry. The article contributes to the existing literature by adding a European perspective on internationalization in sport management higher education and integrating the perspective of competency-oriented curriculum development. The findings of the study will be of international interest to sport management program coordinators, (prospective) students, graduates, representatives of the labor market, and policy makers.

Literature Review

Higher education institutions have to respond to increasingly globalized societies, economies, and labor markets (Killick, 2006) and prepare students for “global citizenship” (Leask, 2001; Leask & Bridge, 2013). Knight (2004) argues that internationalization of higher education is relevant at national, sector, and institutional levels, and that this involves policies, strategies, and programs. Many academic programs implement international dimensions, such as student exchange programs, foreign language study, internationalized curricula, area or thematic studies, joint degree programs, cross-cultural training, staff mobility programs, and visiting lecturers and scholars (Knight, 2004). In the European context, publicly funded programs that support partnership alliances across countries and continents (such as Erasmus+) have considerably expanded in the past decades. An example is the Bologna Process, initiated by politicians of the European Union, which aims to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) across Europe. As a tool of the European Higher Education Area, ECTS supports international mobility of students, for instance, by enhancing studying in different European countries and recognizing their studies at higher education institutions abroad for a qualification aimed for at a higher education at home. About 60 ECTS credits represent one full year of academic study (European Commission, 2019b).

Leask and Bridge (2013) developed a conceptual framework of internationalization of the curriculum. They suggest considering three elements in curriculum design. First, internationalization of the curriculum should prepare students for the requirements of professional practice and citizenship, such as the ability to meet performance demands in the workplace and being ethical and responsible citizens in a globalized world. Second, they highlight the importance of specific feedback and assessment of student learning according to international and intercultural learning outcomes related to their lives as citizens and professionals in a globalized world. Third, there is a need to systematically develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes, such as language capability and intercultural competencies, at different levels across study programs. This conceptual framework takes into consideration that different contexts influence the design of internationalized curricula (Leask & Bridge, 2013; Teichler, 2004).

The existing sport management literature has scrutinized the issue of increased internationalization in both its impact on research (Breitbarth et al., 2019; Costa, 2005) and on educational programs (see e.g., Danylchuk, 2011; Miragaia & Soares, 2017). In line with the aforementioned studies by Leask (2001) and Leask and Bridge

(2013), sport management scholars indicate that within the sport management student environment, students interact in societies that are not defined by national or geographic borders. They are increasingly aware of global issues; not only as individuals, but also as global citizens (Danylchuk, 2011; Danylchuk, Baker, Pitts, & Zhang, 2015). This has impacted curricula in sport management education, and international sport is now recognized as a subdiscipline within the sport management academic field (Fay, Velez, & Thibault, 2014; Miragaia & Soares, 2017). Internationalization processes have also led to an increasing use of international literature used in courses. International journals and books are part of sport management course literature. With English as the lingua franca of academia (Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2016), courses provided in English are also increasing in sport management (Breitbarth et al., 2019). However, curricula need further change with a global and international approach, including international experts as course advisors, more intensive research partnerships, and knowledge sharing between universities as well as steadily adapting sport management education that is responsive to an increasingly international sport labor market. Scholars call for international perspectives both within sport management education and research (Breitbarth et al., 2019; Costa, 2005; Danylchuk et al., 2008; Miragaia & Soares, 2017). These aforementioned studies touch on internationalization of sport management education in general, but do not provide suggestions for subject-specific content within the course curriculum. Research into course content is important for future graduates’ employability in the sport management labor market. Therefore, connecting existing literature on recommendations for sport management curricula with subject-specific competencies² in the sport management labor market will foster content-specific recommendations in sport management curricula.

Mathner and Martin (2012) provide a holistic literature review on studies that examined sport management competencies and highlight a wide range of personal and social skills, but also sport management subject-specific competencies, such as leadership, financial and membership management, human relations, and service marketing (see also Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; Hatfield, Wrenn, & Bretting, 1987; Jamieson, 1987; Koustelios, 2003; Lambrecht, 1987). In a more recent study, Fahrner and Schüttoff (2020) highlight that different contexts of sport management fields require different competencies. Cuskelly and Auld (1991) have distinguished competencies between different sectors in Australia: local and regional sport associations, state-level sport organizations, private sport businesses, and public sector agencies. Although these studies are helpful in shaping current sport management curricula, research of subject-specific competencies connected to sport management education is needed (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020; Miragaia & Soares, 2017).

The Culture and Practice of Sport in Germany, Norway, and Spain

Germany, Norway, and Spain were selected, as they can be considered a good representation of Europe as a distinct geographic, cultural, political, and intellectual space, which also affects the specific and diverse features of sport on the continent. Geographically, Norway is the northernmost country on the continent, whereas Germany is situated in the center and Spain in the south. Geography and climate strongly influence the culture of how people exercise sports actively or engage in otherwise. While

Norwegians demonstrate a passion for winter sports, such as cross-country skiing (see e.g., Goksøyr, 2008), Spaniards prefer summer sports, such as cycling and soccer (Delorme & Raspaud, 2011), and for Germans, winter sports, such as biathlon, or summer sports, such as soccer, are equally popular (IfD Allensbach, 2019). The culture of sport in Europe in general, and in Germany, Norway, and Spain, in particular, is influenced by various organizations from four sectors, namely, public sector, sport organizations and confederations, sport clubs, and the private sector.

Sport structures on the continent differ greatly, with partly weak and partly strong governmental influence. While Germany and Norway, as representatives of a liberalist sport governance model, base their sport structures on a large volunteer movement (LandesSportBund [LSB] Niedersachsen, 2019; Skille, 2011), Spain, with an interventionist sport governance model, shows a more active role of the state in the organization of sport (Enjolras, 2009; Rohde & Breuer, 2017).

In all three countries, individual club members and local nonprofit sport clubs are embedded in a hierarchical federated sport governance system. There are sport organizations at the national, regional, and district level. These organize competitions, such as leagues and tournaments, at their relevant level. The sport confederations support the local sport clubs and the organized sport movement in different areas, such as health promotion, integration, sustainability, and sport facility development through dialog and consultation (LandesSportBund [LSB] Niedersachsen, 2019). The national sport organizations and national confederations represent the interests of their sports and countries, and develop sport policy at the international level, but also improve sports in their countries based on experience gained in the international sport network.

The local nonprofit sport club is the cornerstone for physical activity and sport in the three countries. These clubs are characterized by voluntary membership, independence from the government, a focus on members' interests, democratic decision making, and volunteerism (Enjolras, 2009). The level of professionalization and commercialization of sports shows great variance between the three countries. While in Germany and Spain, professional and partly highly commercialized leagues exist in various sports, such as soccer, basketball, handball, volleyball, and ice hockey; it is mainly soccer, which can be regarded as a professional sport in Norway (Adam & Hovemann, 2017; Rohde & Breuer, 2017; Skille, 2011).

Private sector sport organizations work under market conditions and produce goods and services for active and passive sport consumption. One of the major fields of activity for these organizations is well-being and fitness. In addition, several (global) sporting goods manufacturers and retailers compete for market share and target groups (e.g., Adidas, Decathlon).

Sport Management (Education) in Germany, Norway, and Spain

After the successful establishment of the first sport management programs in the 1980s, the European Association for Sport Management was established in 1993 as an independent association representing the sport management community in research and higher education in Europe (European Association for Sport Management, 2018). With more than 440 members and 27 conferences since its foundation, as well as the European Sport Management Quarterly as its official journal, the European Association for Sport Management promotes and develops critical sport

management scholarship and represents the interests of the sport management community in Europe.

As no overarching information on European sport management education exists, the authors analyzed the higher education programs in Germany, Norway, and Spain using a systematic approach with the aim of identifying and examining all sport management programs in the respective countries. A web search was conducted in the respective national languages as well as English to identify the supply of sport management programs. Next, a database with information on the respective institutions, degrees, length, faculty, and curriculum content was created for the three countries.

In many European countries, higher education institutions offer sport management as a study specialization within a sport sciences degree. However, the administrative units responsible for sport management vary greatly both within Europe and in the three countries. For example, at Leipzig University (Germany), sport management education is offered by the Department of Sport Economics and Sport Management. At the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (Norges Idrettshøgskole [NIH]), sport management is located in the Department of Sport and Social Sciences, and at the University of Castilla-La Mancha within the Department of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. The programs vary in length and thematic focus. While most German and Norwegian bachelor degrees usually consist of 180 ECTS (+120 for the master degree), Spanish degrees are made up of 240 ECTS for the bachelor (+60 for the master degree). In all countries, public institutions dominate in sport management education, but there is an increase in private institutions with sport management programs in Germany and Spain. This great institutional diversity results in a large variety of subjects and topics being covered, such as leisure management, sport politics, sport marketing, public management, and international sport organizations (see also Dunkel, Wohlfart, & Wendeborn, 2018; Petry, Froberg, & Madella, 2006). The following excerpts of information on internationalization within curricula of higher education sport management programs offer an overview of the status quo in Germany, Norway, and Spain in the academic year 2018/19.

In Germany, the first postgraduate course in sport management was established at the Bayreuth University in 1981, followed by a diploma course 4 years later. The first chair for sport management and economics was established at the German Sports University Cologne in 1995, forming the *Arbeitskreis Sportökonomie* as a national amalgamation of interested academics and practitioners (Schütte, 2016). Since then, there has been a continuous increase of programs and institutions. According to the authors' knowledge, some 48 sport management programs have existed in Germany at 31 higher education institutions in 2019, 15 of them being master degrees.

The authors examined current curricula of these programs and identified a deficit of internationalization. Next to generic management modules focusing on international content (e.g., international finances, international business and management), only few modules concentrated on sport management specific content (e.g., international sport business, global sports events). Only one out of 11 universities offers specific international sport management courses. Meanwhile, four out of eight universities of applied sciences and four out of 12 private institutions offer international sport management modules. Other international modules (e.g., intercultural competencies, mandatory language modules) were mainly offered within private institutions. Concerning student exchange the sport sciences programs of Leipzig University were analyzed by way of

example. In the academic years 2014–2019, only 20 of 1,200 students went abroad and four students were welcomed at the faculty on average per year.

In 2019, three institutions have offered sport management programs at the bachelor level (established 2003, 2004, and 2014), and two at master level (1987 and 2011) in Norway. According to the authors' knowledge, the Bø Hedmark University College started with a 1 year course in sport administration focusing mainly on sport events and facilities, closely followed by the NIH in Norway in 1987. Previously, two other institutions established courses in 2004 and 2008 which discontinued after 3 years respectively. All three current institutions offer modules including internationalization aspects with sport management specific content. One master degree is offered entirely in English. The NIH, meanwhile, offers the last fall semester for bachelor students completely in English (30 ECTS) for national and international students. Norwegian students can opt to do an internship (optionally abroad) instead of this fall semester, whereas international students are given the opportunity to do an internship in Norway in the subsequent spring semester. Of their 150 sport management students, on average nine go abroad within an academic year. Parallel, 17 international students spend at least one semester at the specialized sport sciences institution per year. Sport management programs in Norway make a point of investing in national and international networks and long-term relationships both in academia as well as sport organizations.

According to the authors' knowledge, the beginning of sport management in Spain can be placed after the FIFA World Championship in 1982 and the official application for the 1992 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in 1984. In the period between 1986 and 1996, more than 40% of the existing 49,000 sport facilities in Spain have been developed (Delorme & Raspaud, 2011). The first institutes of physical education were established in the early 1970s, followed by the investment plan for sport facilities in Spanish municipalities in the 1980s. Parallel, the first sport management specific modules were created and integrated in sport science degrees (Rial, 2014). In 2019, 42 universities have offered a sport science degree at the bachelor level, which include between two and four sport management specific modules. Only one university offers a bachelor's degree in sport management, which, though mainly taught in Spanish, comprises 50% international students (mainly from Asia, Latin America, France, and Germany). In addition, 11 official master degrees in sport management exist, offered by private and public institutions. Three of the private master's degrees in sport management (often comprising approximately 50% international students) offer their modules in English. Six of the master degrees include modules with content on international sport management.

Methods

Instrument

This study focused on comparing information on internationalization of sports in three European countries. The research was conducted using a qualitative, descriptive transversal method, through semistructured interviews. Based on the reviewed literature, the results of a previous quantitative survey³ and the research questions, an interview guide was developed, which was reviewed and validated by researchers of the New Age of Sport Management Education in Europe project (Flick, 2014; King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2019). The interview guide (Table 1) consisted of seven

open-ended questions related to the four main themes trends, competencies, job development, and recruitment. One open-ended question gave informants opportunity to offer additional comments. In addition, sociodemographic information of the interviewees was collected. The first two questions were directly oriented toward internationalization and its impact on the sport management labor market, whereas the remaining questions focused on other trends, competencies, job development, and recruitment. As qualitative research relies on extensive reflection and reflexivity (Finlay, 2003), each project partner had the option of adapting specific parts of the interview guide depending on national results of the previous quantitative survey as well as interviewee and organizational affiliation. As the interview guide would be applied in three countries with different languages, the initial instrument was developed in English. The interview guide was then translated into German, Norwegian, and Spanish and critically reviewed by the entire research group to obtain validity of the translation. The interviews were conducted in person or via Skype between December 2018 and February 2019.

Participants

The sample consisted of 30 professionals (eight females and 22 males) with management positions in sports. The participants were purposefully selected taking into account different inclusion criteria so that they could be considered key informants (Yin, 2018). Due to their expertise in a field, a key informant is able to provide relevant information on questions asked in the interview as well as give notions about new omitted issues or the most critical points for the research. Specifically, the participants in the study had to have as a minimum 5 years of experience in management positions and represent at least one of the four aforementioned sport sectors: public sector (municipal sport services, public associations, etc.), sport organizations and confederations (national sport organizations, regional confederations, etc.), clubs (local and professional sport clubs), and private sector (private sport facilities, sport equipment companies, etc.). The selection of participants was carefully carried out in each of the countries and discussed between the research team before the interview (see Tables 2–4). The interviews lasted between 34 and 60 min, were audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim in the native language of the countries.

Data Analysis

The data analysis aimed at identifying relevant information in relation to internationalization in the different countries using a theoretical thematic analysis (Hayes, 1997). This method enables the researchers to provide a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data, coding for a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, two authors per country respectively conducted a comprehensive reading of the transcripts and coded the information related to internationalization. Next, the authors collated the codes into potential themes and reviewed these at the level of the coded data extracts for each nation and in relation to the entire dataset. After this process, each research team individually recoded additional data within themes that were missed in the previous coding stage. The review identified a thematic map with the following subthemes: knowledge of international sport organizations and their governance, global trends, interorganizational collaboration, sociocultural competency, language competency, and event management competency. Upon discussing these subthemes three main themes were identified: (a) knowledge of international sport

Table 1 Interview Guide for New Age of Sport Management Education Project

Central question	Control questions	Side notes
Almost all respondents of our previous survey claim that <i>commercialization, digitalization, and internationalization</i> will have a strong impact on their future working environments. What are your thoughts about these trends for your own organization?	And what are your thoughts about the impact specifically on Commercialization, Digitalization, and Internationalization? If yes, why? If no, why? Main impacts/effects?	Focus on own organization not the entire sector or labor market (approximately 10 min)
Can you name other trends that will have an impact on the working environment of sport managers in your organization?	Which of the named trends do you consider most important? Why? How will this trend affect the work of sport managers in your own organization?	Within the next 10 years (approximately 5 min)
We are interested in examining competencies that future employees in the area of sport management should possess. Competencies include skills, abilities, knowledge, qualifications, etc. Which competencies are particularly important for future sport managers in your organization?	Can you describe a situation in which is particularly important? (Why + so what?) Why is this competency particularly important for your organization? Can you think of another important competency in the area of Sport management specific knowledge, Personal, social, methodological competencies (Why +so what?) Repeat 3 4 times.	Goal is to differentiate between sport management specific knowledge (and qualifications) and other competencies (e.g., soft skills). If the interviewee focuses on one competency category only, try to ask about the other category. (15 min)
To what extent are X, Y, and Z important for future sport managers in your organization? (Country specific question regarding top future competencies according to previous quantitative survey)	Can you describe a situation in which is particularly important? Why is this competency particularly important for your organization?	If the top three were already mentioned previously, choose other within national top five important competencies. (approximately 10 min)
According to our previous survey, the fastest growing positions in sport management are within X and Y . Does this apply to your organization? (Country specific question regarding fastest growing positions according to previous quantitative survey)	If yes, why? If no, why and what other positions are growing and why? Main impact/effect?	(approximately 5 min)
Do you currently have a cooperation with an institution of higher education?	If yes, why? main impact/effect? What does the cooperation look like? Is there an added value? If no, why not?	(approximately 5 min)
How does your organization recruit new employees?	What are the most important recruitment methods/tools? Why you choose these methods/tools preferably over others? In what ways does a cooperation with an institution of higher education affect your recruitment process?	(approximately 5 min)
Is there anything else you would like to mention or describe?	Anything you find particularly relevant?	

organizations, their governance and global trends; (b) intercultural and language competencies; and (c) international sport event management. The authors followed a semantic approach in identifying and interpreting themes. Both individual findings and cross-country comparisons were critically reflected and discussed within the research group (Finlay, 2003, Wolcott, 1994), making thought processes explicit by engaging in dialogue about interpretive possibilities. Following Smith and McGannon’s (2016) reflection on rigor in qualitative research, we have consciously foregone member checking as we do not believe this method to enhance credibility or trustworthiness of the results. To illustrate the results and their interpretation, exemplary quotes are included below. The

principal researcher of each country reviewed the translated quotes to maintain the “voice” of the interviewees and avoid possible misunderstandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of the comparative analysis against the background of current literature, current sport management education in the three countries as well as possible curriculum development within sport management programs. To understand how internationalization necessitates change in global

Table 2 German Sample of Interview Participants According to Sector, Gender, Current Work Position, and Education

Informant	Sociodemographic Information			
	Sector	Gender	Position	Education (field)
G 1	Nonprofit sport clubs	Male	Managing director	Bachelor (Economics)
G 2	Professional sport club	Male	Managing director	MBA
G 3	Professional sport club	Male	Managing director	German Diploma (P.E.)
G 4	Regional sport organization	Male	General secretary	German Diploma (Sport Sciences)
G 5	Regional sport organization	Male	Commercial manager	Magister (Sport and Economics)
G 6	Regional sport organization	Female	CEO	German Diploma (P.E.)
G 7	Private sector	Male	Senior VP	German Diploma (Sport Economics)
G 8	Private sector	Male	Senior project manager	German Diploma (Sport Economics and P.E.)
G 9	Private sector	Male	Senior team head	German Diploma (P.E.)
G 10	Public sector	Male	Professor	PhD (Sport Management)
G 11	Public sector	Male	Freelancer/head of department	German Diploma (Economics)
G 12	Public sector	Male	Professor	PhD (Sport Sciences)

Table 3 Norwegian Sample of Interview Participants According to Sector, Gender, Current Work Position, and Education

Informant	Sociodemographic information			
	Sector	Gender	Position	Education (field)
N 1	Local sport club	Male	CEO	High school
N 2	National sport organization and public sector	Female	Director	Master (Social Sciences)
N 3	National sport organization and public sector	Female	CEO	Bachelor (Psychology)
N 4	Private sector	Male	CEO	Bachelor (Marketing)
N 5	Public sector	Male	Professor	PhD (Administration and Organizational Theory)
N 6	Public, national sport organization, and private sector	Female	Director	Master (Sport Management)
N 7	National confederation	Female	Head of sport development	Master (Pedagogics)
N 8	National sport organization and public sector	Female	CEO	Master (Business)
N 9	Private sector	Female	Head of marketing	Master (Sport Management)
N 10	Professional sport club	Male	CEO	MBA

Table 4 Spanish Sample of Interview Participants According to Sector, Gender, Current Work Position, and Education

Informant	Sociodemographic information			
	Sector	Gender	Position	Education (field)
S 1	National sport organization	Male	President	Bachelor (Policies and Sociology)
S 2	National sport organization	Male	President	Vocational Training (Sport)
S 3	Public sector	Male	Head of sport	Master (Public Management)
S 4	Public sector	Male	Head of sport	Bachelor (Sport Sciences)
S 5	Private sector	Female	Director	Master (Sports Law and Management)
S 6	Private sector	Male	Director	Bachelor (Sport Sciences)
S 7	Local sport club	Male	Technical director	Bachelor (Sport Sciences)
S 8	Local sport club	Male	President	High school

sport management curricula, the perspectives of key informants from the public sector, sport organizations and confederations, sport clubs and the private sector are identified across the three identified themes: (a) knowledge of international sport organizations, their governance and global trends, (b) intercultural and language competencies, and (c) international sport event management.

Knowledge of International Sport Organizations

One key theme identified in the data analysis is necessary knowledge about international sport organizations and their governance as well as global trends. Internationalization affects sport organizations depending on their economic goals and geographical reach. Data from the interviews highlight the pivotal role of internationalization in private sport organizations. Although the importance is unanimously high, the focus and meaning of this trend are quite different across the three examined countries. In Germany, interviewees of organizations from the private sector clearly associate internationalization with commercialization and growth opportunities. For these representatives, internationalization means reaching new target groups, but more generally, it means a need to stay competitive in the market (G-8).

The Norwegian representatives highlight the importance of knowing the international competition to stay “in the game” (N-4). Due to this, (international) lobbying and knowledge about international business and international sport politics are important. Representatives of private sport organizations in Spain were ambivalent about internationalization. While acknowledging the need to adapt to the “global competitive environment” (S-5), the actual adaptation is delayed in comparison with Germany and Norway. In the case of fitness and health clubs, one representative defines the relationship of internationalization more as a reaction to and adaptation of global trends:

On the basis that successful business models that are born in some countries are adopted by others, and you must have global and European knowledge to get ahead of the competition. For example, the low-cost sector in the United States was adopted in Europe by Germany, and the Spaniards soon adapted the German model to the Spanish culture. (S-5)

The interviews with representatives from sport organizations and confederations also identified the need to focus on current issues and trends. While representatives of regional sport organizations in all three countries mostly dismiss the effect of internationalization, representatives of national sport organizations emphasize the effect of current development in international sport (G-6, N-2, and S-1). The representatives discuss the impact of international decisions in sport on the national sport and thereby the management of sport. The president of a national sport organization in Spain explains:

The changes that take place at international level directly affect the management of an entity in its territorial scope. That is why it is key to be attentive to the global development strategies of your sport and the rest of sports. Including new sports trends. (S-1)

In Germany, the representatives differentiate strongly between organized sport at a grassroots level and elite sport. While internationalization within grassroots sport is not regarded relevant (G-4), on an elite sport level, competition is strong and international trends need to be followed and considered (G-6). Next to a profound knowledge of international structures of

(international) sport organizations, regional sport organizations were not concerned with internationalization. Representatives of all three countries mention the link between digitalization and internationalization.

The interviewed representatives of public sector organizations in Germany and Spain find little to no relevance of internationalization for their respective working environment. Their focus is primarily on the municipality or region (G-4 and S-6). In Spain, one representative argues that national policy and economic problems impede thoughts of internationalization: “We try to adapt to the moment but due to the laboriousness of procedures to implement any novelty in the administration, due to political decisions and long technical procedures, sometimes you give up moving forward with projects” (S-4).

In the Norwegian public sector on the other hand, internationalization is perceived as an opportunity and a public responsibility. One representative speaks about the possibilities of European Union funding for international projects (N-2). Norway being a relatively small country (by inhabitants), municipalities and regions rely on international cooperation and projects to develop and professionalize. Knowledge about international finances as well as funding opportunities stand out as relevant. Another representative in Norway elaborated on international inspiration for new and innovative sports facilities (N-6).

Due to the diverging role of sport clubs in the three countries, internationalization has a varying effect. In Norway, a “Child Protection Law” protects children against competitive pressures, overspecialization, and burnout (Skirstad, Waddington, & Säfvenbom, 2012). The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (*Norges idrettsforbund og olympiske og paralympiske komité* [NIF]) enforces this law for all organizations in sport. Furthermore, international businesses are seen as competition to the traditional sport clubs (e.g., private soccer academies). One representative of a Norwegian sport club explains:

Previously the sport for all clubs were more focused upon themselves and within the nation, which is no longer the case. Nowadays one must pay attention to international organizations in order to see the effects from the international to the local organization. (N-5)

In Germany, the answers of two representatives from different sports highlight the relevance of the sport-specific context (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020). One representative of a nonprofit sport club from basketball associates the participation of its senior and youth teams in international sporting competitions with further improving and professionalizing club structures and processes: “This also applies to internationality, of course. We participate in European tournaments, we play all around the world with both our professional team and our youth program, we have [international] partnerships [. . .], and internationality is a big, big keyword accordingly” (G-5). Whereby internationalization appears to have a certain relevance for this basketball club, it does not seem to be the case for a professional sport club from European handball, as the interviewed individual highlights: “Well, internationalization has no effect on us, because handball has been and always will be a local thing. There are no international brands and there probably won’t be any, we can ignore it” (G-3). The variation is explained by considering basketball as a more global sport than European handball. Moreover, basketball is one of the strongest growing sports in Germany (Delaware North, 2016), whereby though handball is very popular in Europe, its limited popularity on a global scale has halted its prevalence.

Soccer clubs, on the other hand, seem to have their own rules. Professional clubs are private organizations, largely commercialized in the three countries, and increasingly internationalized in Germany and Spain (Adam, Bauers, & Hovemann, 2019). Internationalization here is associated with expansion and revenues. International player markets, ever increasing sales and a growing interest in global fan markets govern the effects in these organizations. A German representative from a professional soccer club explains:

I also believe that it is going to occupy us intensively in the next years. It is something that we are just realizing, and we've just hired someone for international marketing. Because when the league is competing with five or four other leagues in Europe, and one day the Japanese, the Chinese and the American league will be global competitors, then it is going to be a matter of how to tap into markets, how to achieve on-site presence, how to secure sponsors, how to sell the knowledge that you have in precisely those markets, a transfer of know-how. (G-2)

The authors conducted a systematic analysis of course handbooks and module descriptors of all current sport management study programs on internationalization in the three countries and found that few programs focus on sport management specific topics. Representatives of all three countries, most notably in Norway, on the other hand, highlight the need to understand the organization and governance structures of international sport organizations to react to the special needs of the varying organizations and their effect on the national sport organizations. In this sense, internationalization in sport management seems to enjoy a special status for sport organizations in highlighting the relevance of subject-specific competencies. Considering these, sport management programs should develop and integrate these topics in sport management curricula. By way of example, a current module description of a best practice example from the NIH is included in the Box 1. The course focuses on the international organization of sports in English language for both Norwegian and international exchange students. These subject-specific modules could be separated in a lecture, presenting the different types of sport organizations, supplemented by an interactive seminar focused on discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the different organizations. This promotes reflection on how these organizations can affect their own sport organizations. The different layers of context in the organizations are relevant from the institutional, local, national, and regional up to the global level (and vice versa). As highlighted, knowledge on global finance flows or funding schemes within sport and across countries could be a relevant subject-specific competency to be integrated in such a course. Moreover, understanding sport politics in international organizations is a prerequisite for understanding what is going on in the international sport world and sensitizing students to the "cost of globalization for individuals in developing countries, for their sport system, and for their country" (Thibault, 2009, p. 13).

Akin to the aforementioned recommendation, the inclusion of global trends in sport management curricula is recommended. Preparing students for *global citizenship* (Danylchuk, 2011; Danylchuk et al., 2015; Leask & Bridge, 2013; Miragaia & Soares, 2017) means helping them develop competencies that are specific to current issues and trends in the industry (e.g., digitalization, e-sports, good governance, etc.). In Germany, the curricula of sport management programs rarely include such modules and thereby miss the opportunity to adequately prepare students for the heterogenous and ever changing sport labor market.

Furthermore, the representatives in the study highlight the link between internationalization and digitalization as two key trends in the sport industry. It is important to regard trends as interlinked processes in a constantly changing world. In addition, students are encouraged to reflect on the negative aspects of globalization as propagated by Thibault (2009). Consequently, inviting and including experts from international sport organizations as guest speakers to discuss and brainstorm solutions to current topics with students is recommended. This recommendation also follows previous literature that calls for the development of communication competencies in students (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). Furthermore, discussions can focus on literature from international academic and nonacademic journals and on current issues in global sport (e.g., European Sport Management Quarterly, insidethegames.biz, playthegame.org).

Intercultural and Language Competencies

The second identified theme comprises intercultural and language competencies. Adding to subject-specific knowledge, the focus on social and personal competencies follows current literature. The identified theme includes topics, which call for student and teacher mobility as well as the development of foreign language competencies (mainly English) within study programs.

Exhibiting intercultural competencies can play a vital role for the professionalization of sports and sport organizations. In Spain, one representative of a local sport club argues international vision will become important with increasing professionalization of grassroots sport in the future: "It will be necessary to have a more international vision in the future to be able to copy good practices of more successful models in other countries, as far as clubs are concerned" (S-7).

In Norway, the representatives highlight the opportunities of internationalization to professionalize by learning from benchmarks and improving national management and athletic performance. One respondent explains the growing internationalization of coaches (N-10) and increased number of international training camps (N-5).

Intercultural competency is vital for international success. In Norway, one representative of the public sector argues:

This is something that everybody understands; the world gets more and more international and this is the case with the Norwegian population, so if one wants to work with sport activities and prepare for it locally, regionally and nationally Norway must look to what kind of activities they who migrate have done before they entered this country. This is a type of internationalization. (N-6)

For large private sport organizations as well as professional soccer clubs in Germany, internationalization is part of the necessity to expand and grow their business worldwide and, therefore, also affects their organizational culture. Next to hiring candidates from a global pool, they expect employees to have intercultural competencies, experience abroad, and be (geographically) flexible (G-9). Being part of an international team requires finesse and competencies in adapting to new situations and people as well as skills in utilizing modern communication technologies. Moreover, ambitious employees need to be mobile and subordinate personal aspirations to organizational requirements:

And I think for someone who has a bit of career ambitions, the topic of mobility is extremely important. [. . .] Nobody has a

Box 1: International Organization of Sports—Module Description

Sport Management 327 (Internal Categorization of Courses at NIH) International Organization of Sports at Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (10 ECTS)

Target Group

National and international Bachelor students (third year)

Learning Outcome

The students shall:

- Understanding the key aspects of globalization and its effects on sports.
- Explain how international organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and international sport federations operate.
- Conduct an analysis of how the Olympic movement (IOC, international federations, and national Olympic societies) works.
- Make comparisons between international and national sports federations.
- Make comparisons between different international federations based upon competition structures and the elaboration of these structures.
- Have knowledge about the historic development of the IOC and international anti-doping work.
- Understand how to analyze change in international sports organizations in terms of different theoretical perspectives.
- Explain how the national and international sports are influenced by the European Union, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).
- Be able to conduct an analysis of the role of international organizations in areas such as doping and regulating international transfers.
- Understanding the Nordic sports systems and how they affect the elite sports system.

Module Organization

The module is taught (in English) through various lectures, discussions, case studies as well as student presentations. Students hand in weekly resumes of selected literature (maximum length of each resume: 400 words).

Content

Session (3-hr slots each)	
1 and 2	Introduction + IOC; Development of IOC + Olympic movement
3 and 4	International competition structure (Fédération Internationale de Ski, Union Cycliste Internationale, International Skating Union, and Snowboard); Workshop WADA and IOC
5 and 6	Globalization; Organization of international and Nordic elite sport
7	Workshop: international organizations
8 and 9	State sport and international relations Understanding international (change) theories
10	Gender diversity in European sport governance
11	Sport for development + summarize and exam preparation

Grading

- Individual oral exam (80% of the total grade, Grades A-F)
- Student presentation (pass/fail)
- Individual weekly resume of selected literature (20% of total grade)

chance to get into our talent program if he [or she] isn't relatively flexible, or happy to go to Shanghai for a few years. (G-8)

In Norway, internationalization is part of everyday business. International experts are involved in most decisions, media contracts are international and many customers are from outside Norway. One representative from the private sector in Norway suggests: "We

represent a global brand, so we only work internationally The most athletes, the whole milieu, big sponsor contracts and media deals are not only discussed in Norway" (N-4).

The findings highlight the necessity to approach and adapt to intercultural specificities and contexts, particularly in the private sector and professional sport clubs. Especially in Germany and Spain, private institutions specifically focus on aspects of

intercultural competence within the curricula. Giving students the opportunity to develop intercultural competencies is crucial to be able to handle these requirements. LeCrom, Greenhalgh, and Dwyer (2015) discuss sport focused study abroad courses and highlight their relevance in creating more “culturally understanding and sensitive students” (p. 65). Next to intercultural training and courses to develop these competences, Europe as a unique geographical, cultural, political, and intellectual space offers many opportunities. Through the Bologna Process, the European Commission has clearly signaled the demand for intercultural exchange by supporting a semester abroad (Erasmus Project) as well as international internships (Promos Project) in Europe. The recommendation follows this signal and propagates the facilitation and promotion of student and staff mobility within sport management programs. Next to intercultural competencies, students develop personal competencies, build networks, and broaden their horizon (N-9). Following LeCrom et al. (2015), students are recommended to invest time in study abroad programs, as the impact of study abroad programs increases with its duration. Analogously, no disadvantage (e.g., prolonged study time) should result from time spent abroad. Faculty of sport management institutions are also encouraged to broaden their horizon with an overseas stay, building and cultivating a network of collaborating institutions, which can be recommended to students for internship or semester abroad programs.

Sport management programs can further promote the development of intercultural competencies via specific formats within courses. One example, which stands out, is the inclusion of international case studies. N-9 (private sector) highlights this format and propagates including “exciting international cases for example on doping, athletes who promote their own brand, and commercialization.” Together with the students, the faculty is responsible to link the knowledge to local and national sport organizations and situations. Moreover, the inclusion of international case studies is of special interest when including national and international students to discuss the impact on different sport systems. Danylchuk et al. (2008) included international case studies in the sport management curriculum, giving students the opportunity to develop intercultural competencies by discussing topics with students from other countries. It is vital for the lecturer to support students with these case studies and guide the discussions. Competitive course formats may also develop comparative competencies and are of particular interest and relevance to *sport* management students. The 4-day student seminar embedded in the annual conference of the European Association of Sport Management, for example, includes a competitive management game. Students have an opportunity to compete against sport management students from all over the world and with this refine relevant competencies for global employability. Likewise, in Germany, the University of Mainz has developed an annual case study competition on global sport management topics (mainly large-scale international sport events) with six to eight participating higher education institutions.

Next to intercultural competencies, internationalization necessitates foreign language skills. English is increasingly becoming the lingua franca in private sport organizations and professional sport clubs. One representative summarizes:

Internationalization is a fundamental part of our reality and nothing else. Simply speaking: Currently, less than 5% of our total sales happen in Germany. And as a global company, we

are present and relevant everywhere, and the most important markets are China and America. (G-7)

While in Germany, this result seems to be particularly relevant for global organizations (private sector and professional soccer clubs), the context of Norway as a small country, necessitates English on a more holistic level (excluding only small, not-for-profit sport clubs). As noted previously, the findings show the importance of considering the context and differences of the examined countries. Due to its small size and necessity to integrate in the global social and economic contexts, Norwegian students often have to read and speak English. In Spain, on the other hand, the relevance of speaking English was not highlighted. This result aligns with the results of the analysis of sport management education programs in the individual countries. While only few German programs are adapting to the need of English language competency, for Norway this is already status quo. Moreover in Spain, only private sport management study programs focus the development of English language competencies.

To promote educational outcomes, sport management programs across all countries and institutions need to enable and promote English in both bachelor and master degree programs. Due to the differences between countries, the implementation of this recommendation will be more or less complex for global sport management programs. A course selection that is taught in English (e.g., sport management, project management, economics) should be available (as electives) for bachelor and master students. Adopting modules from partner institutions can be a first step in internationalizing a curriculum and integrating a foreign language in the process. This is particularly interesting if the modules are available online. Furthermore, lecturers should be able to include English texts in the course syllabus and enable writing the final thesis in English. To increase the standard and quality of English as a classroom language, a certain level of English should be required by all master students as a prerequisite to begin the study program. Based on the findings obtained, English is recommended to be the classroom language in subject-specific sport management modules within master degree programs. Finally, in line with Europeanness, students need to be encouraged to take other language courses (e.g., German, Spanish, and French).

International Sport Event Management

The awarding of major international sporting events has affected the development of sport in the three countries, be it the FIFA World Cup 2006 in Germany, the World Championship in Nordic Skiing 2011 and Biathlon 2016 in Norway, or the Olympic and Paralympic Games 1992 in Spain. With unique and major sports events being staged in the home countries, athletes generate motivation and efforts, and sport organizations and national governments mobilize competencies and resources (Skille, 2011). The third identified theme entails international sport event management, offering very specific recommendations on a curriculum level.

Particularly private sport organizations and professional sport clubs are increasingly expanding their markets to a global scale. In this sense, both German and Norwegian representatives spoke about eventization of the sport leagues and the need for (international) event management competencies. This is interlinked with high levels of commercialization of sports and more focal in

Germany than Norway or Spain. One representative of a professional soccer club explains:

There's a big difference between commercialized countries like Germany and others. I was in Romania and watched games or in Sweden the game is even more important. You go there and you're happy when you see the game and then you go home and with us it's such an event that you're willing to spend money on it. Of course it has to go longer and longer and has to offer some added value. (G-3)

As event management is one possible field of employment for graduates, sport management students need to be prepared for the requirements within this industry. International sport events function as catalyst to transform communities and revitalize urban environments. Danylchuk et al. (2015) explain the necessity of event competencies in all relevant sectors of the sport industry. Due to ever changing rules within bidding processes as well as differences between international federations (N-6), the necessity of expertise with the different steps of bidding, planning, and implementing major events is underlined. Parallel, and as mentioned, gaining knowledge of international sport organizations and their governance is highly relevant and emphasize the pertinence of a *sport* event specific course. Sport management programs should, therefore, include a comprehensive sport event management course with theoretical and practical components, giving insight on best practice examples as well as the opportunity to be involved in organizing a bigger event or organizing their own event. Including theoretical input on (public) infrastructure, risk management and tourism will refine subject-specific competencies relevant for this area.

Outside a specific sport event course, students could be encouraged to partake in international sport events as volunteers. This was mentioned by several interviewees (N-3, N-6, N-7, and G-11) and can be implemented by advertising national and international events as well as possibilities to volunteer via communication platforms of the institutions.

Conclusion and Outlook

In the past three decades, sport markets in general, and the sport labor market, in particular, have become integrated globally, not only in the increase of international sporting competitions, but also in terms of international economic activities undertaken by sport organizations from the various sectors. To understand the effects of internationalization on these organizations, as well as sport management scholarship and education in the context of the specific features within the different countries, a culturally embedded and specific research approach was needed. Therefore, this study involved interviews with key informants from sport organizations in Germany, Norway, and Spain. The aim was to elicit information about how internationalization affects their working environments and, based on the results, develop key recommendations to higher education institutions to develop their sport management curricula, for graduates "to be successful in this international industry" (Danylchuk et al., 2008, p. 127).

Looking at how well higher education institutions prepare students for entering the sport labor market as highly skilled global citizens, the study identified major deficits in sport management curricula. In all three countries, higher education institutions appear to be too slow in adapting to the sport labor market needs of a workforce adept at international and intercultural competencies of varying degrees. In the three countries, the curriculum includes

international topics only to a low degree. Furthermore, it is mainly in Norway, where the curriculum includes modules, which are instructed in English language. Therefore, alarming obstacles exist in higher education, which are detrimental to fostering employability and international competitiveness of European sport management students and graduates, especially in the private sector, national sport organizations, and professional sport clubs.

To overcome these deficits, this study developed recommendations for higher education institutions to internationalize their curriculum. It is advised that, within their resources and capabilities, higher education institutions use an incremental approach. First, they are advised to include international topics and cases studies, such as on international sport organizations, international management and marketing, and event management in their sport management curricula, to enhance students' understanding of these topics and give them the opportunity to acquire subject-specific competencies. In a second step, it is advised to include English as a classroom language, whereby this can be implemented at bachelor level with sport management specific modules as electives and at master level with mandatory modules. With these implementations, study programs become more attractive for international incoming students, which bring in their own backgrounds to the classroom and contribute to an international and intercultural learning experience. In this context, higher education institutions are advised to expand their active international network to enhance international mobility of students and teaching staff.

This study contributes to the sport management literature, by offering a European perspective on sport management education, and highlights opportunities and challenges that higher education institutions face to contribute to employability and international competitiveness of their sport management graduates in the context of an increasingly international sport labor market. Although Germany, Norway, and Spain represent the diversity and richness of Europe as a distinct geographical, political, intellectual, and cultural space, more comparative studies focusing on other European countries are needed to make more profound judgments and develop recommendations for an international sport management curriculum. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that sport organizations from the four sectors are exposed to internationalization to varying degrees. Therefore, further research is needed which enquires into the specific necessities of the different organizations, to understand their context specificity (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020) and to understand whether there is a need to internationalize the sport management curriculum in general or to offer sector-related specializations, such as electives. In addition, the study has highlighted that internationalization is one key trend in the sport labor market. However, there are other global trends, such as digitalization, commercialization, and sustainable development, which also impact on internationalization. Therefore, future research needs to look more specifically on how these trends interrelate and impact on the sport labor market and on sport management education. It needs to be emphasized that most of the findings from this study resulted in recommendations for curriculum development of sport management programs at public universities, which have been more generally referred to here as higher education institutions. These public universities themselves are faced with an increasing competition from private education service providers, which use internationalization as one of their unique selling propositions. Therefore, this study also highlights that internationalizing the curriculum is not only concerned with qualifying students according to labor market needs, but it also means a necessity to remain competitive in the sport management education market.

Notes

1. Knight and de Wit (1997, p. 6) define globalization as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, [and] ideas [. . .] across borders. [It] affects each country in a different way due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture and priorities.” Internationalization on the other hand emphasizes the relationships between and among different nations and countries (Knight, 2004).
2. Competencies are understood as “personal features and abilities, which are required to perform a particular activity and with it an observable result (i.e., performance). This understanding encloses skills, attitudes and knowledge” (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020, p. 4).
3. The interviews were conducted within a qualitative data collection phase in the European Union funded project New Age of Sport Management Education in Europe (Erasmus+ KA203 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education) in nine countries, which followed the quantitative data collection phase. Results of the New Age of Sport Management Education project report a high impact of internationalization on the working environments of sport management professionals at present and in the future for Germany (66%), Norway (57%), and Spain (95%) (Wohlfart & Adam, 2019). More information can be retrieved from the project website (www.nasme.eu). In addition, findings from the project were presented and discussed within two workshops at the 26th and 27th European Sport Management Conferences in Malmö (2018) and Seville (2019).

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