

Knowledge and Skills of Migrant Sports Professionals in Italy

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Abstract: This study evaluated the effectiveness of customized training for managerial skills development based on the principles of “Education through Sport”. The quasi-experimental research design was utilized. In the same way, experiential learning was adapted to improve the sports skills of the sports professionals in Italy. The study’s theoretical foundation focused on the experiential learning cycle of sports professionals measured quantitatively by a survey questionnaire. The use of intervention through the ETS program determined their level of improvement. Paired sample T-test was employed to determine whether the ETS program enhanced the knowledge and skills of the migrant’s potential sports managers. Likewise, ANOVA was used to determine the significant difference among the migrant’s levels of knowledge and skills.

Key words: education through sports, migrants, sports, knowledge, skills

JEL codes: Z2

1. Introduction

According to the European Commission, 447.3 million inhabitants live in the EU. Of the 447.3 million inhabitants, 23 million were non-EU citizens, about 5.1% of the EU's total population. In 2020, about 8.6 million non-EU citizens were employed in the EU labor market. Many of these non-EU citizens are “essential workers”. These migrant job-seekers need to determine what to re-skill and up-skill to optimize their chances of landing a job and participating in any sport-related industry. They are widely considered an integral part of the workforce of any sports-related activities.

One strategy to address this challenge among migrants is the ETS methodology. Education Through Sports (ETS) is a non-formal educational approach that works with sports and physical activities. It refers to developing critical competencies of individuals and groups that contribute to personal development and sustainable social transformation. Additionally, ETS aims to integrate sports elements for an educational purpose to address a social issue, develop various competencies and initiate lasting and transversal results. However, this methodology has yet to be tested on foreigners and transnational sports managers, coaches, and trainers.

In this study, the sports operators involved had no prior learning outcomes embedded in the training format before the experiment. They are between 21 to 65 years old. On the other hand, the migrants involved in the local activities did not have the knowledge, skills, and competencies characterizing high-quality sports manager profiles before the experiment. They are between 19 to 45 years old. Hence, the present study aims to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of customized training for managerial skills development based on the principles of “Education through Sport” to assess the knowledge and skills of migrant sports professionals in Italy and

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determine the trainers' expertise in the program.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following queries: 1) What is the level of Knowledge and Skills of the Migrants in Italy as reflected in the Pre-test and Post-test?; 2) What are the overall Knowledge and Skills of the Migrants in Italy as reflected in the Pre-test and Post-test?; 3) What is the trainer's expertise in Italy as reflected in the Post-test?; and 4) Is there a significant difference in the level of knowledge and skills of the migrants in Italy as potential sports managers?

2. Literature Review

The systematic under-representation of migrants in non-playing roles within sports organizations is one of the many facets and compelling issues on the broader challenge of social exclusion of migrants in Europe.

The EUROSTAT (2017) reported that 20.7 million non-EU nationals lived in European Union (EU) countries as of 2016, accounting for a total of 4.1% of the total EU population. Most of these third-country migrants living in the EU were younger than the local population. Working-age adults represented the most consistent category. The available statistical findings also indicate a recrudescence in migrants' flows in coincidence with the still ongoing migration crisis, as well as highlight the significant barriers to be overcome for ensuring a meaningful integration of the newcomers within the labor market and at the societal level in broader terms.

EUROSTAT accounts depict a consistent disparity between migrants and locals in access to employability opportunities, with the EU-28 unemployment rate being 8.6 percentage points higher for migrants than for nationals in 2016. Also, 30.3% of migrants in the EU-28 were assessed as being at risk of poverty and social exclusion against 16% of nationals.

Further, the OECD 2015 Report on Migrant Integration (2015) illustrates the structural nature of migrants' labor market exclusion, indicating that the youth unemployment rate of native born-offspring of migrants is almost 50% higher than among youths with native-born parents, with migrant youngsters being also more likely to be NEETs than youths with no migrant background. Relatively, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, in its 2010 Report "Racism, discrimination, and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport", underscores that under-representation of migrants in responsible positions within Sports clubs and associations makes up a substantial component of a concerning phenomenon of inequality in substantial participation in sport affecting migrants as compared with nationals.

EU policy documents underline the relevance of sport as an agent of social inclusion for migrant targets and its contribution as an agent of job creation. The EU "White Paper on Sport" (2007) highlights that "Sport makes an important contribution to economic and social cohesion and more integrated societies" while also facilitating "the integration into society of migrants and persons of foreign origin".

In the specific sports field, the under-representation of migrants is particularly evident and challenging in their exclusion from positions of authority and overall representation in non-playing positions. This observed gap poses issues that affect the lives of migrants and the host European countries, not only in sports development but also in cultural and educational integration.

A critical intermediate step in effecting greater participation of migrants in the position of responsibility within Sports organizations is the development of methodological capacities for the vast audience of operators, such as sports coaches and trainers. One strategy that can address this step is the "Education through Sports" (ETS) methodology.

The development of ETS as a distinct methodological approach combining the use of sport with educational benefits for a diverse audience of targets is unique to grassroots sports practice. It is rooted in the theoretical and practical reflections developed by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) for an audience of sports and non-formal learning educators.

Within this framework, an attempt is made to structurally profile education through sport by defining it as an approach that incorporates informal education, experiential learning, and active participation, integrating and implementing sport elements for a broader educational purpose, the specific focus of which may vary but is generally limited to addressing a social issue, developing social competencies, and provoking a lasting social transformation.

The general requirements include meticulous planning and preparation of the learning process and achieving clear, realistic, and measurable outcomes following implementation. This definition encompasses a diverse audience of beneficiaries and potential users, with grassroots sport and youth work organizations serving as the ETS approaches indicated user clusters.

3. Research Methodology

For this research, several assessment methods were employed that provided the researchers with valuable information for the program's effectiveness. In the same way, experiential learning was adapted to improve the sports skills of sports professionals. Their sports practice was used to quantify their level of sports skills.

The study's theoretical foundation focused on the experiential learning cycle of sports professionals, which was measured quantitatively by a survey questionnaire. In this aspect, a quasi-experimental research design was applied wherein pre-test and post-test were conducted to determine the level of sports skills of the sports professionals. The use of intervention through the ETS program determined their level of improvement.

Migrants and sports professionals involved in the study are sports managers, coaches, and trainers, and they were invited to participate in the research survey. They were asked about the perception of their knowledge and skills in the following areas such as administration and human resource management in sports, coaching and mentoring, digital skills for sports managers, management of sports events, financial sustainability strategies and mechanisms for support organizations, marketing communication in the field of sport and good governance.

In the quasi-experimental part, only the migrants or sports professionals were included in the experiment and were given the sets of activities under the ETS program. It is known as One-group Pre-Test-Post-Test, where only one group is given a pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test.

The maximum number of sports professionals in the program is 25. Migrants or sports professionals are between 19-45 years old. The trainers are between 21-65 years old. The participants who joined the ETS program were either male or female sports professionals. The sports professional has 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, and more than ten years of experience.

In this study, the mean was used to determine the level of knowledge and skills using the 5-Point Likert scale and the following qualitative descriptors; 1.00-1.49 (Strongly Disagree or SD); 1.50-2.49 (Disagree or D); 2.50-3.49 (Neither nor Disagree or ND); 3.50-4.49 (Agree or A); and 4.50-5.00 (Strongly Agree or SA). Furthermore, the standard deviation allows researchers to see how responses are widely dispersed or spread out about the mean. Hence, this descriptive measure was used to determine the variations in the respondents' responses in each domain and item.

A paired sample T-test was used to determine whether the ETS program enhanced the knowledge and skills of the migrants or potential sports managers. Likewise, ANOVA was used to determine the significant difference among the migrants' overall knowledge and skills as potential sports managers. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used by the researcher in the computation and analysis of data gathered in Italy.

4. Results, Findings, and Discussion

Table 1 shows that the migrants or potential sports managers in Italy disagree that they are knowledgeable and skilled in sports administration and human resource management, mean = 2.2556; sd = 0.71215. The items about sports administration and human resource management ranged from 2.50 to 3.49. Likewise, the respondents acknowledge that they need to be more knowledgeable and skilled in coaching and mentoring, with a mean of 3.0556; sd = 0.56787.

Table 1 Level of Knowledge and Skills of the Migrants in Italy in the Pre-Assessment Evaluation

Knowledge and Skills	Mean	Standard deviation	Qualitative descriptor
A. Administration and Human Resource Management in Sport			
1. Understanding of the safeguarding regulations required to deliver ETS to community groups	2.3667	0.85029	D
2. Awareness of the health and safety legislation specific to ETS delivery in the respective country	2.0667	0.90719	D
3. Understanding employment regulations in relation to equality and diversity in sport	1.9000	0.80301	D
4. Ability to communicate in the language of the host country using both written and verbal skills	2.9000	1.21343	ND
5. Can demonstrate recruitment and interview technique relevant to the role of a sports manager;	2.1000	0.80301	D
6. Can use a variety of techniques to a range of audiences in formal and non-formal settings	2.1000	1.21343	D
Mean	2.2556	0.71215	D
B. Coaching and Mentoring			
1. Knowledge of coaching and mentoring skills in sport management and organizational leadership and development of inclusive sport sessions	2.6667	0.92227	ND
2. Understanding of grassroots sports coaching and the development structures involved	2.5000	0.62972	ND
3. Awareness of leadership and volunteering pathways available to individuals and groups in the sport sector	3.0667	1.01483	ND
4. Able to communicate to a range of participants in the sporting environment using sound coaching and mentoring techniques	2.3000	0.98786	D
5. Can demonstrate the ability to lead diverse groups of participants with empathy for the specific requirements of the individual and the group	2.5667	0.81720	ND
6. Proficient in the use of technology and digital communication platforms- email, mobile, social media	4.2667	0.98027	A
Mean	3.0556	0.56787	ND
C. Digital Skills for Sport Managers			
1. Knowledge and basic skills on how to use IT (computers, PCs, tablet and mobile technology) and how to apply it in the sport sector.	4.0667	0.86834	A
2. Knowledge and proficiency in the use of a range of Social Media platforms relevant to the sporting environment.	3.7667	0.67891	A
3. Knowledge and proficiency in the use of DATA management systems to monitor activity levels and create basic management reports.	3.3333	1.06134	ND
Mean	3.4778	0.96959	ND
D. Management of Sports Events			

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1.	An understanding of the requirements to deliver safe sports sessions and the supporting legislation at a country level	2.7667	0.89763	ND
2.	Knowledge of the safeguarding requirements for all participants at sports sessions including children, vulnerable adults, young people, volunteers, coaches, and spectators	2.6667	0.71116	ND
3.	Awareness of the sports administration processes required to organize successful sports events	2.1667	0.59209	D
4.	Demonstration of sound event planning and management practice	2.4000	1.03724	D
5.	An ability to train event staff and volunteers in preparation for event delivery in their chosen roles	3.0333	0.88992	ND
6.	Adept using relevant registration systems and event management programmes	2.6333	0.71840	ND
Mean		2.8444	0.71777	ND
E. Financial Sustainability Strategies and Mechanisms for Support Organizations				
1.	Basic knowledge and understanding of how Sports Organization would develop and adopt Financial Sustainability Strategies and Mechanisms to secure operation	3.2667	1.22990	ND
2.	Knowledge and advanced skills on how to design and develop a financial strategy to adopt in Sport Organizations	3.0667	.78492	ND
3.	Knowledge and practical tools and methods on how to secure the financial sustainability of Sports Organizations	2.7667	1.45468	ND
Mean		2.8667	0.98494	ND
F. Marketing and Communication in the Field of Sport				
1.	An understanding of the written and verbal skills required to promote activity in the field sport	3.6667	1.06134	A
2.	Knowledge of the relevant tools to support marketing and communication in the field of sport including, promoting, analyzing, and gaining feedback from participants	3.1000	0.71197	ND
3.	Awareness of the marketing and communication channels linked to community sport development and leadership in sport	3.1333	0.89955	ND
4.	An ability to write articles and reports to support marketing and promotion of sports activity	2.8333	1.08543	ND
5.	Skilled in the use of the digital photography and video using a range equipment including mobile phones and tablets to record activity	3.1000	1.21343	ND
6.	Use of reporting skills to highlight the equality and diversity of activity in the field of sport	3.3333	1.18419	ND
Mean		3.2333	0.72530	ND
G. Good Governance				
1.	Understanding of EU and national level principles on good governance in sport	2.6667	0.92227	ND
2.	Knowledge of the impact on organizations and individuals relating to safeguarding and how to assess and monitor risk	3.1667	.91287	ND
3.	Able to identify the key aspects of strategic development in the field of sport and its connection with local/ community delivery	3.4667	1.07425	ND
4.	An ability to support good governance in local community sport groups	3.2333	0.77385	ND
5.	Use of appropriate communication skills within local level governance settings including committees, community meetings, and similar sporting settings	3.6000	0.93218	A
6.	An ability to plan meetings, agendas, and schedules relating to governance in community sport	3.7000	0.83666	A
Mean		3.3056	0.64784	ND

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Strongly Disagree or SD); 1.50-2.49 (Disagree or D); 2.50-3.49 (Neither nor Disagree or ND); 3.50-4.49 (Agree or A); and 4.50-5.00 (Strongly Agree or SA).

Regarding management of sports events, financial sustainability strategies and mechanisms for support organizations, marketing, and communication in sports and good governance, the respondents neither agree nor disagree with being knowledgeable and skilled in management.

This table also reveals the overall assessment of the respondents from Italy regarding their level of knowledge and skills of being potential sports managers during the pre-test on the different areas of concern from

administration to coaching, digital skills, management of sports events, finances, marketing, and good governance.

These results suggest that the migrants in Italy need training and interventions in order to prepare them to be actual sports managers in the future with confidence in their knowledge and skills.

Using the ETS program, it can be noted in Table 2 that the respondents from Italy agree to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for them to perform administration and human resource management in sports, coaching and mentoring, digital skills for sports managers, management of sports events, financial sustainability strategies and mechanisms for sports organizations, marketing, and communication in the field of sport and good governance, mainly within the range of 3.50 to 4.49.

Table 2 Level of Knowledge and Skills of the Migrants in Italy as Reflected in Post-Assessment Evaluation

Knowledge and Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Descriptor
A. Administration and Human Resource Management in Sport			
1. Understanding of the safeguarding regulations required to deliver ETS to community groups	4.0000	0.90972	A
2. Awareness of the health and safety legislation specific to ETS delivery in the respective country	3.7667	0.72793	A
3. Understanding employment regulations in relation to equality and diversity in sport	3.6333	0.80872	A
4. Ability to communicate in the language of the host country using both written and verbal skills	4.3000	0.74971	A
5. Can demonstrate recruitment and interview technique relevant to the role of a sports manager	3.6333	0.71840	A
6. Can use a variety of techniques to a range of audiences in formal and non-formal settings	3.8000	1.09545	A
Mean	3.8556	0.59489	A
B. Coaching and Mentoring			
1. Knowledge of coaching and mentoring skills in sport management and organizational leadership and development of inclusive sport sessions	4.1000	0.75886	A
2. Understanding of grassroots sports coaching and the development structures involved	3.9000	0.54772	A
3. Awareness of leadership and volunteering pathways available to individuals and groups in the sport sector	3.8333	0.83391	A
4. Able to communicate to a range of participants in the sporting environment using sound coaching and mentoring techniques	3.8667	0.97320	A
5. Can demonstrate the ability to lead diverse groups of participants with empathy for the specific requirements of the individual and the group	3.8667	0.68145	A
6. Proficient in the use of technology and digital communication platforms- email, mobile, social media	4.6667	0.47946	SA
Mean	4.0389	0.41450	A
C. Digital Skills for Sport Managers			
4. Knowledge and basic skills on how to use IT (computers, PCs, tablet and mobile technology) and how to apply it in the sport sector	4.6333	0.55605	SA
5. Knowledge and proficiency in the use of a range of Social Media platforms relevant to the sporting environment	4.4667	0.57135	A
6. Knowledge and proficiency in the use of DATA management systems to monitor activity levels and create basic management reports	4.4333	0.67891	A
Mean	4.5111	0.42646	SA
D. Management of Sports Events			
7. An understanding of the requirements to deliver safe sports sessions and the supporting legislation at a country level	4.1000	0.92289	A
8. Knowledge of the safeguarding requirements for all participants at sports sessions including children, vulnerable adults, young people, volunteers, coaches, and spectators	3.7333	0.90719	A

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9. Awareness of the sports administration processes required to organize successful sports events	3.4333	0.89763	ND
10. Demonstration of sound event planning and management practice	3.9667	0.85029	A
11. An ability to train event staff and volunteers in preparation for event delivery in their chosen roles	4.0000	0.83045	A
12. Adept using relevant registration systems and event management programmes	3.8667	0.86037	A
Mean	3.8500	0.59266	A
E. Financial Sustainability Strategies and Mechanisms for Support Organizations			
4. Basic knowledge and understanding of how Sports Organization would develop and adopt Financial Sustainability Strategies and Mechanisms to secure operation	4.3667	0.76489	A
5. Knowledge and advanced skills on how to design and develop a financial strategy to adopt in Sport Organizations	4.2667	0.63968	A
6. Knowledge and practical tools and methods on how to secure the financial sustainability of Sports Organizations	4.2667	0.82768	A
Mean	4.3000	0.56290	A
F. Marketing and Communication in the Field of Sport			
7. An understanding of the written and verbal skills required to promote activity in the field sport	4.5333	0.68145	SA
8. Knowledge of the relevant tools to support marketing and communication in the field of sport including, promoting, analyzing, and gaining feedback from participants	4.1667	0.83391	A
9. Awareness of the marketing and communication channels linked to community sport development and leadership in sport	4.3333	0.84418	A
10. An ability to write articles and reports to support marketing and promotion of sports activity	4.0000	0.94686	A
11. Skilled in the use of the digital photography and video using a range equipment including mobile phones and tablets to record activity	4.1667	0.87428	A
12. Use of reporting skills to highlight the equality and diversity of activity in the field of sport	4.4000	0.62146	A
Mean	4.2667	0.56154	A
G. Good Governance			
7. Understanding of EU and national level principles on good governance in sport	3.7667	0.67891	A
8. Knowledge of the impact on organizations and individuals relating to safeguarding and how to assess and monitor risk	4.1000	0.88474	A
9. Able to identify the key aspects of strategic development in the field of sport and its connection with local/ community delivery	4.3667	0.66868	A
10. An ability to support good governance in local community sport groups	4.3667	0.85029	A
11. Use of appropriate communication skills within local level governance settings including committees, community meetings, and similar sporting settings	4.4000	0.67466	
12. An ability to plan meetings, agendas, and schedules relating to governance in community sport	4.4333	0.77385	A
Mean	4.2389	0.48083	A

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Strongly Disagree or SD); 1.50-2.49 (Disagree or D); 2.50-3.49 (Neither nor Disagree or ND); 3.50-4.49 (Agree or A); and 4.50-5.00 (Strongly Agree or SA)

The highest results were under the digital skills for sport managers with a mean of 4.5111, sd = 0.42646. In contrast, the lowest awareness of the sports administration processes required to organize successful sports events, mean of 3.4333, sd = 0.89763, neither agree nor disagree, under the management of sports events which is also the lowest among rating areas with a mean of 3.8500, sd = 0.59266, agree. The overall mean score of 4.2389 with a standard deviation of 0.48083 shows that all the participants from Italy agreed that they had acquired the knowledge and skills needed to become potential sports managers.

After the intervention using the ETS program, the post-test results reveal the respondents' ratings of their trainers. It can be gleaned in Table 3, that the trainers in Spain were rated high with a mean of 3.9000; sd =

0.93614. The highest rated was time management with a mean of 4.4167, sd = 1.24011, qualitatively described as High, while the lowest was Responsiveness with a mean of 3.5833, sd = 1.24011. The training series provided the participants with a high level of expertise in all rating areas, improving what they had prior to the ETS program.

Table 3 Level of Trainer's Expertise in Spain After the Introduction of Education Through Sport-Based Instructional Program

Trainer's Expertise		Mean	SD	Qualitative Descriptor
1.	Expertise	3.9167	0.99620	H
2.	Clarity	3.6667	1.23091	H
3.	Cultural	3.9167	1.24011	H
4.	Time Management	4.4167	1.24011	H
5.	Responsiveness	3.5833	1.24011	H
Mean		3.9000	.93614	H

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very Low or VL); 1.50-2.49 (Low or L); 2.50-3.49 (Medium or M); 3.50-4.49 (High or H); and 4.50-5.00 (Very High or VH)

As can be gleaned from Table 4, the comparative assessment of the migrants' overall knowledge and skills as potential sports professionals in the overall pre-test and post-test results shows a significant difference with $p = 0.000$. It shows that their pre-test evaluation is less than the post-test after the ETS program was infused.

Table 4 The Significant Difference in the Level of Knowledge and Skills of the Migrants in Italy Before and After the Introduction of Education Through Sport-Based instructional programs as reflected in the Pre-Assessment and Post-Assessment Evaluations

Knowledge and Skills		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. Administration and Human Resource Management in Sport	Pretest	2.2556	30	0.71215	0.13002	-10.663	29	0.000
	Post Test	3.8556	30	0.59489	0.10861			
2. Coaching and Mentoring	Pretest	3.0556	30	0.56787	0.10368	-6.528	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.0389	30	0.41450	0.07568			
3. Digital Skills for Sport Managers	Pretest	3.4778	30	0.96959	0.17702	-5.308	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.5111	30	0.42646	.07786			
4. Management of Sports Events	Pretest	2.8444	30	0.71777	0.13105	-5.438	29	0.000
	Post Test	3.8500	30	0.59266	0.10820			
5. Financial Sustainability Strategies and Mechanisms for Sport Organizations	Pretest	2.8667	30	0.98494	0.17983	-7.343	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.3000	30	0.56290	0.10277			
6. Marketing and Communication in the Field of Sport 6	Pretest	3.2333	30	0.72530	0.13242	-7.168	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.2667	30	0.56154	0.10252			
7. Good Governance	Pretest	3.3056	30	0.64784	0.11828	-7.561	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.2389	30	0.48083	0.08779			
Overall	Pretest	3.0056	30	0.37190	0.06790	-14.909	29	0.000
	Post Test	4.1516	30	0.31750	0.05797			

It means that the ETS program as an intervention helped the migrants-participants acquire the knowledge and skills in all areas of administration and human resource management in sports, coaching and mentoring, digital skills for sports managers, management of sports events, financial sustainability strategies and mechanisms for sports organizations, marketing, and communication in the field of sport and good governance.

5. Conclusion

The result of this study confirms that education through sports is an effective intervention program in enhancing the knowledge and skills of the migrants in Italy, where the training program was conducted. ETS as an intervention program was influential in developing the knowledge and skills of the migrants in Italy as potential sports managers. Education through Sports has enhanced migrants' employment potential as sports managers in their host country.

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