



Representation and structural discrimination in football in Europe

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The case of minorities and women

Dr Steven Bradbury, Dr Mahfoud Amara, Dr Borja García, Professor Alan Bairner

Loughborough University, UK

Key areas of research focus

To identify levels of representation in football amongst minorities and women in three tiers of the game

- Playing
- Coaching
- Leadership

To identify structural barriers impacting on levels of representation of minorities and women in terms of playing, coaching and leadership positions

- Socio-economic and cultural barriers
- Overt racisms or sexism
- Physical and cultural stereotypes and oppositions
- Organisational provision and institutional discrimination

Definition of institutional discrimination

Institutional discrimination is:

- The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate service to people because of their ethnic, cultural or religious background or their gender.
- It can occur intentionally or through a lack of understanding and ignorance.
- It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.
- It can also be evident in an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice that limits equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes for minorities and women.
- It occurs at all levels of an industry or organisation.

Levels of minority representation in football in Europe

Playing:

- 32.7% of all players at highest levels are 'expatriate migrant' players from Europe, Africa and South America
- Mixed levels of minority representation as players in the amateur and professional game in different countries

Coaching:

- Low levels of minority coaches in the amateur and professional game and at national and regional federations

Leadership:

- Less than 1% of senior administrators at professional clubs and executive committee members at national and regional federations are from minorities

Examples of institutional discrimination: playing

Limited processes of talent identification and youth recruitment at professional clubs

- Recruitment through traditional networks and lack of engagement with minority football clubs
- Recruitment informed by physical and cultural stereotypes of minority players amongst club scouts

'There is certainly more work to do with our talent scouts, in recognising that they develop grooves and patterns where they go and look for talent and what they perceive as talent. Far more of that needs to happen to make it the norm that young people are breaking through from those communities, and that coaches are expecting young people to break through from those communities'

Examples of institutional discrimination: coaching

Limited processes of coach recruitment at professional clubs

- Recruitment from within dominant social and cultural networks of 'known' applicants

'White managers have had virtually all the opportunities to get some experience and visibility. It is not in the club owners consciousness to think of a former black player who might be doing their coaching awards and have the possibility of becoming their next manager'

- Recruitment based on cultural stereotypes regarding 'suitability', 'compatibility' and 'risk'

'I don't think they want to employ minorities as managers because they are worried that they will not be accepted by the squad and by other coaching staff. In terms of black managers, they just wouldn't be accepted by the players or by the spectators, especially in Central and Eastern Europe'

Examples of institutional discrimination: leadership

Limited processes of recruitment and selection to leadership positions

- Recruitment premised on personal recommendation and positions not publicly advertised at professional clubs

'How can minorities get these jobs, or even apply for these jobs, if they don't even know that they exist, or that there is not a proper process for them to go through to even be considered for these jobs'

- National federation committee selection premised on patronage, sponsored mobility and reward
- Recruitment from dominant networks of 'known' applicants with shared norms, values and cultural backgrounds

'If it were based on people being appointed for their skills, you would see lot more minorities. But with the pyramid way in which those positions are designated. There's no chance. It's 'like for like' selection and more of the same'

Levels of women's representation in football in Europe

Playing:

- Almost two million registered female players in Europe: around 8% of all registered players
- A clear 'North West and the rest' divide in organised female football participation

Coaching:

- Low levels of women coaches in the women's (and men's) amateur and professional game across Europe
- Lack of throughput of women players into coaching positions in the women's (and men's) game

Leadership:

- Low levels of women in senior administrative positions at men's professional clubs
- Low levels of women at the regional, national and European level of football governance

Examples of institutional discrimination: playing

Football as a 'male space' and limited infrastructural development of women's game

- Football perceived as a male activity and construction of gender stereotypes

Football is one of the last resorts of masculine dominance and an arena for defining masculinity. Questions of masculinity are really central to football in many European countries, especially in the East. This makes change really difficult. It makes the 'opening up' of the game to women very difficult. This is why there are so few women players and women's clubs across the region'

- Lack of organisational provision for women and girls in some countries

'It's a matter of opportunity and a matter of how structured a system you have in each country. Some women choose to play football on a social level, just like many men do. But if you want to pursue a professional route, then not all countries have these possibilities'

Examples of institutional discrimination: coaching

Football coaching as a 'male space' and the construction of gendered stereotypes

- Notion of the 'male expert' as coach and the construction of gender stereotypes
- Masculine culture of coach education and the marginalisation of women

'Coaching has been a profession that has been so male dominated. All of the experiences and history which women have inside football is not really recognised as a competence. It is not recognised in the same way as it is with a man'

Examples of institutional discrimination: leadership

Closed processes of selection to leadership positions at national federations

- Recruitment from dominant networks of 'known' applicants with shared norms, values and cultural backgrounds
- National federation committee selection premised on patronage, sponsored mobility and reward

'In many cases they will make decisions which will keep men in powerful positions. They may or may not do it deliberately, but in a way, that doesn't matter. It's what you end up with that matters. The way they recruit means they always get more of the same. It's a closed system. It's an old boys club'

- Women's skills, experience and competencies are undervalued and ignored

In the governing bodies at a national level and internationally they are mostly males. There is gender discrimination because they don't expect females to know about football. They don't value women's experience or their competence inside the game. So the idea to involve women in football administration or governance doesn't even come to anybody. It is simply not considered'



Moving forward

Recognising the positive impact and value of cultural and gender diversity

'It's about recognising people from culturally diverse backgrounds. There's a fair possibility that a lot of them have really good skills, insights and knowledge of how things could be improved. It's a valuable resource.'

Implementing strategies to enable equality of outcomes

'Sometimes you have to treat people differently to make them equal, to create an equal situation for them. This is the case in football at the highest level. There needs to be the introduction of some positive action measures like quotas. They can be creative in how it's introduced, but there has to be some kind of strategy to quicken the pace of change'

Working collaboratively to bring about change

'You've got to do something that makes a difference, so that we are not in ten years time having the same conversation. You can't do that unless you get all the parties around the table and working collaboratively on it'