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The cross-cultural training needs of football coaches

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Abstract

The ability to interact and communicate effectively in different cultural contexts has never been more relevant for football coaches because cultural diversity in football has increased in the past decades. Yet, there is a reduced number of institutions that are currently offering cultural training to coaches and it is unknown whether coaches feel the need for such training. This study aimed to explore the cross-cultural training needs of 115 football coaches with national and/or international experience ($M = 13.4$ years; $SD = 8.53$). To maximise recruitment reach, an online survey with open-ended questions was used followed by a qualitative thematic analysis. There were four master themes: Cross-cultural training needs in the global football market; Cross-cultural awareness is important in football; Football-specific cultural training; Training by migrant coaches, no matter how. Most coaches perceived a benefit from cultural training in preparation for international appointments, but some felt that coaches already had cultural awareness because they manage individuals and adjust easily to different cultures. Preferences were shown for cross-cultural training delivered by migrant coaches and with a football-specific focus. This is the first study to explore the perceptions of football coaches about cross-cultural awareness and training needs and provides insights to providers of coach education.

Keywords: Emigration, Manager, Soccer, Cultural Diversity, Transnationalism

The Cross-Cultural Training Needs of Football Coaches

Imagine a Portuguese football coach hired to manage an English Championship team. The team is owned by an American and its players are from 16 different nationalities out of four continents. Cultural diversity in European football has increased over the past few decades because of increased globalisation in the world of sports. Coaches' mobility across countries and clubs has never been larger for a variety of macro (e.g., social and economic) and micro factors (e.g., age, education, and personal attitude towards migration) (Borges, et al., 2015; Borges et al., 2020; Orłowsky et al., 2016a; Orłowsky et al., 2016b; Smith, 2016). It is common nowadays to see coaches managing multinational teams and working with athletes and technical staff from various nationalities and different cultural backgrounds. Whilst this global phenomenon brings a positive dynamic to football, it also creates challenges for coaches working in foreign countries and/or with multicultural teams (Griggs & Gibbons, 2014; Vincent et al., 2010). One of the challenges faced by coaches is the need to adjust quickly to new cultural sport contexts (Borges et al., 2015). Taking the theoretical perspective of Cultural Intelligence, these adaptations can be across the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions (Ang et al., 2007). Although coaches are commonly trained in technical and tactical aspects of the game as well as psychology and physiology, they rarely receive cross-cultural training (Callary et al., 2014).

Theoretically, cultural intelligence has been conceptualised as encompassing four dimensions: metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behaviour (Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2012). Metacognition is the awareness and ability to plan for interacting with people from different cultures. This involves developing action plans before a culturally diverse encounter (planning), knowing about cultural thinking and knowledge of self and others (awareness), and reviewing assumptions and adjusting to new experiences (checking). Cognition is the understanding of how cultures are similar and different. This involves knowing

about the universal aspects of a culture (cultural-general knowledge) and knowing how to be effective in a specific cultural context (context-specific knowledge). Motivation is the level of interest, persistence and confidence in interactions with people from different cultures. This involves valuing diverse experience because it is intrinsically satisfying (intrinsic interest), valuing the benefits of culturally diverse experiences (extrinsic interest) and having task-specific confidence in these types of experiences (self-efficacy to adjust). Behaviour is the ability to adapt when interacting with people from different cultures. This involves a flexible manner (verbal behaviour), being flexible in communication using gestures rather than words (non-verbal behavior), and communicating flexibly the types of messages (speech acts). These dimensions are based on the original Sternberg and Detterman's (1986) multidimensional model of intelligence.

Even if migration flows in sport have a positive impact on coaches' intercultural experience and career development (Borges et al., 2015; Sain et al., 2022), they are often viewed unfavourably by sports media (Griggs & Gibbons, 2014; Vincent et al., 2010). The football press, for instance, is cynical about foreign coaches (and players), referring to them by their nationality, questioning their loyalty to national teams, blaming them for poor national talent development, and highlighting coaches' cultural gaffes (e.g., Vincent et al., 2010; Borges et al., 2022). Cultural awareness is a personal and professional asset when dealing with the host country's media. Past migration experience and familiarity with the language and culture (the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society) can all contribute to this awareness. Learning by experience already plays a crucial role in coach education and the careers of coaches (Cushion et al., 2010; Cushion et al., 2012; Mallett et al., 2009), and migration (which can be considered a form of experiential learning) has been shown to have a positive impact on coaches' perception of their ability to adjust to different cultural settings (Borges et al., 2015). Although not all coaches migrate, most coaches do manage multicultural

teams and therefore they may feel unprepared to deal with the cultural specificities of all members of their teams (Maderer et al., 2014).

The inclusion of cross-cultural training in coach education courses therefore may be an important addition to the coaches' training (Cushion et al., 2012). This would give coaches important tools related to culture and cultural differences, to communicate with players from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and provide the right support in their migration process. Training approaches specific to cross-cultural training can be experiential or didactic (Cushner & Brislin, 1997). The experiential refers to people learning by practice and trainees receiving feedback from their mentors along the way. These could be secondments in a foreign country, meetings in a foreign country or intercultural workshops, virtual meetings facilitated by mentors, line managers or supervisors. Didactic refers to a cognitive understanding of the concepts related to cross-cultural interactions. Examples of these activities could be lectures, videos and culture assimilator exercises provided by experts on cross-cultural training, former expatriates and host country colleagues. The training can consider all the stages of an international assignment because this will help to prepare for the adaptation to the new cultural context (e.g., before the assignment), it will support and contextualise the new cultural experience (e.g., during the assignment), and will help to reflect on the cultural experience to prepare for new assignments (e.g., after the assignment). The training should also include all the people involved in the assignment (coach, family and host country colleagues) (Reiche et al., 2014). For instance, coaches and their partners can attend seminars on migration and receive personalized mentoring to also plan their careers.

In this study, our main aim was to explore the cross-cultural training needs of football coaches in their interactions with foreign sports stakeholders in their own country or abroad. Our research question was: What do football coaches perceive as their cultural training needs when interacting with foreign sports stakeholders? The purpose is to question the coaches about

their needs cultural training needs and their views on the training content and training methods. This study may inform the development of training programmes that support the cultural adaptation of coaches.

Methods

Philosophical Assumptions

To gain a deeper understanding of football coaches' cross-cultural training needs, we have used qualitative methodology. This study was based on ontological relativism and epistemological constructivism to explore the coaches' views of their training needs regarding cross-cultural training (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). A relativist ontological position implies that social reality is dependent on the human mind, and it is influenced by circumstances that make it flexible and multidimensional. The constructivist epistemology takes the view that what coaches write about their cross-cultural training needs reflect their personal and professional experiences, thoughts, values and beliefs (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The ontological relativism and epistemological constructivism positions are evident in the following aspects of this study: the questions included; how the data analysis identified the themes related to the topic; how the results used quotes to exemplify the views of the coaches; how the discussion of the findings related to the themes allowed to identify the coaches' views about their cross-cultural training needs.

Procedures

For recruitment, the football coaches' training providers and facilitators (Football Associations) in Portugal, Germany and England were gatekeepers for the dissemination of an online survey by emailing it to their respective football coaches' network. A purposive sample and subsequent snowball sampling were used. This population has its particular characteristics and access is often difficult, especially for elite-level coaches. Therefore, we asked coaches to

share the survey link with their privileged contacts. A survey was chosen as a data-collection method because it has the potential to 1) reach participants that would otherwise not be accessible because of their elite status or geographical location, and 2) capture a diversity of opinions especially in under-researched topics (Braun et al., 2020). Inclusion criteria were football coaches over the age of 18 with or without migration experiences. We considered it important to have diversity in the participants' characteristics (e.g., age, nationality) and experiences (e.g., coaching experience, international experience) to understand their general cross-cultural training needs. By following a link to the study, participants could access the participant information sheet and give consent before being asked to complete the survey. All the information related to the survey was available in English, Portuguese, German and French. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Applied Sciences (SAS1726).

Survey

The survey focusses on the metacognitive aspect of cultural intelligence because it asks coaches for a reflection on their own cultural training needs. Its development was based on previous literature about cross-cultural training (MacNab, 2012; Reiche et al., 2014), and Employment Mobility (Crowne, 2012). The survey was made available online using the LimeSurvey platform and included open-ended questions regarding the cross-cultural training needs of football coaches. The questions were developed in the hope to entice participants to provide rich accounts of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Because the survey was anonymous we were also hoping to capture honest answers regarding migration and culture in sports' coaches. The survey consisted of nine demographic questions and four questions about training needs. The demographic questions were: 1) *What is your year of birth?*; 2) *What is your gender?*; 3) *What is your country of origin?*; 4) *What is your experience as an athlete in your native country?*; 5) *What is your experience as an athlete in the country abroad?*; 6) *What is*

your experience as a coach in your native country?; 7) What is your experience as a coach in the country abroad?; 8) What are your academic qualifications? 9) What are your coaching qualifications? The questions about training needs were: 1) *Do you feel you need cross-cultural training? Please explain why or why not?; 2) What training content do you feel you need and why?; 3) What training methods and forms of delivery would you prefer for your cross-cultural training; 4) What are your views about cross-cultural training. Please write your thoughts and feelings about this matter as honestly as possible.* The survey was developed and revised in English and then translated into Portuguese, German and French. Forward translations were conducted for the survey by native researchers and/or coach educators (see Banville et al., 2000; Schlaegel & Sarstedt, 2016).

Participants

A total of 115 participants completed the online survey (104 males, 4 females, and 7 gave no answer). Participants' age was on average 42 years ($SD = 9.69$) and they had 15.6 years ($SD = 7.33$) of experience as athletes and 13.4 years ($SD = 8.53$) of experience as coaches. The coaches were from seven different countries (France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom). Regarding international experience, 42 participants had previous international experience as professional players and/or as coaches (mean = 5.7; $SD = 8.65$), 64 had no such experience (9 data missing). There were 86 coaches and 21 assistant coaches (8 n/a). Regarding Certification level, 45 participants had levels 1 or 2 (Coaching certificates, such as FA Level 1 and FA Level 2) and 63 had levels 3 or 4 (UEFA coaching licenses, such as UEFA A and UEFA Pro; and 7 data missing). Regarding Education level, 14 coaches had qualifications up to higher education, 50 had a higher education diploma or degree and 45 had a post-graduate degree (6 data missing).

Data analysis

We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) to analyse the qualitative data across the entire dataset (Braun et al., 2020). The data were imported and organised for thematic analysis using MAXQDA 12. The analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and considered the checklist criteria proposed by the authors. First, to get familiarised with the data (immersion) we read the data to understand the coaches' views on cross-cultural training. In this phase, we checked the data generated in the survey and confirmed that it had been correctly imported into the software. Second, during the immersion phase, the data were coded inductively and deductively (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). An inductive approach was used first to code the raw quotes about coaches' views on cross-cultural training. A deductive approach was then used by aligning the code groups with the concepts previously identified in the literature on cross-cultural training. In this coding phase, we provided attention to all items equally. In the third step, we identified the key themes that answered the four survey questions. A thematic map was then created to help with the visual representation of the Themes and Subthemes. The themes were generated based on relevant extracts and showed internal coherence. Fourth, the themes and subthemes were reviewed to ensure they worked well with the coded extracts, so we moved on to the next phase. Fifth, after defining the key themes and master themes, we identified subthemes that were useful in structuring larger master themes. In this phase, we checked our analysis to understand if the story was well organised and if the extracts illustrated the analytical claims. Sixth, we created a table for each of the key themes (see Tables 1 to 4) to provide a clear summary of the data. At several points during the data analysis, the research team acted as critical friends in discussing the lead researcher's theme extraction. Ongoing refinements of themes occurred based on discussions within the research team to refine our understanding of the coaches' views on cross-cultural training (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Researcher's position and research quality

The lead researcher's position can be viewed as studying the familiar (as defined by Berger, 2015) because he is a migrant with coaching qualifications and experience. His experiences of migration include using a non-native language in the host country, coping with his dual identity, and adjusting to a new cultural and professional context. The research team also includes another migrant with coaching qualifications, coach instructors, and an individual with short migration experiences. These experiences helped shape the survey questions and data analysis. The authors constantly engaged in self-reflexivity with their values, beliefs and perceptions about coaches' migration and education. The research team considered Tracy's (2010) eight big-tent criteria when deciding to disseminate the findings. Those criteria are: Worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence. Worthy topic: As stated in the introduction, our topic is relevant because the increase in migrant coaches has been met with very few research efforts to examine their personal and professional circumstances. Rich rigour: The researchers have considerable knowledge of sociological and psychological theories from which to draw in the analysis and presentation of the results; some of these theoretical frameworks are explicitly referenced in the introduction, while others are drawn upon in the discussion. In addition, the researchers' steps to include diversity in the sample most notably nationalities within a population that is traditionally not very accessible (football coaches). Sincerity: Self-reflexivity permeated the study to ensure the experiences (and identities) of the research team were informed but did not bias the methods used. Critical discussions among the team were paramount to clarify or reaffirm interpretations. These aspects are included in the methods section for transparency. Credibility: When writing the results, the research team aimed to include a rich description of thoughts and experiences with concrete quotes that illustrated or embodied the results. Resonance: The research topic and results certainly resonated with the research team who are a mix of coaches, migrants, and academics. The study was well-received by the coaches

themselves given their participation and this is important because they are the ultimate beneficiaries of the research. We think that the findings are transferable into practical applications. Significant contribution: The research team considers that the most significant contribution is to the applied field given the potential to inform the development of training courses, but certainly there are also contributions to the academic understanding of cultural needs perception. Ethical: The methods were designed to incentivise protected, anonymous participation as some of the participants were likely to have lived unpleasant migration-related situations which they might not be prepared to disclose un-anonymously. The research gained ethical approval prior to the study starting which meant an independent panel also assessed the risks to participants. Meaningful coherence: There is a thread through the study which focusses on cultural training needs, and we tried to interconnect the theoretical knowledge with the results to interpret the data in a meaningful way keeping in mind the main research question. The review process also aided in improving the written coherence.

Results

For the thematic analysis, four key themes were used to organise the analysis. Each key theme was a summary answer to each question asked: Cross-cultural training needs in the global football market; Cross-cultural awareness is important in football; Football-specific cultural training; Training by migrant coaches, no matter how. In total, 551 meaningful textual segments were coded. Each key theme is presented in turn, summarised in a table, and followed by a narrative of the themes and sub-themes.

Key theme 1: *Cross-cultural training needs in the global football market*

In answer to the question *Do you feel you need cross-cultural training?*, Football coaches did not agree on whether they needed cross-cultural training (see table 1). Coaches who reported

training needs viewed training as an opportunity to develop their skills and improve their knowledge so they could perform at their best in all cultural contexts. As Coach 56, from United Kingdom, who never had a previous migration experience, wrote: "I can see this as a personal development opportunity. I assume that all coaches would welcome the chance to develop their understanding of how to adapt their coaching behaviours to a new country and being able to provide the best support to their athletes." Training was viewed as an opportunity to prepare coaches to work in a global market. Coach 114 mentioned that "Nowadays, the coaching profession is global (...) and it is important to have access to cross-cultural training so that we can better prepare for this possibility." Coach 285 also add that "It is essential to get this training before working abroad, especially if it is in another continent (...)"

Coaches also viewed the training as important to prepare themselves to work in a foreign country and "(...) to be able to work abroad with foreign athletes" (Coach 142). By fulfilling their needs in this area, coaches felt that they would be more capable of working in different contexts and sports stakeholders from other cultures.

In contrast, coaches who reported no training needs reasoned that they already have sufficient international experience and the level of competence required to work in all cultural contexts: "(...) I have already trained abroad, and my experience and education suggests to me that I am already at a level where I do not need this specific training" (Coach 225). In addition, other coaches reported that the lack of time for training was referred to as a barrier. The current constraints on coaches' contracts force them to move between jobs rapidly, without much time to prepare. Other coaches indicated no needs because they saw the sports culture as an *equaliser* across the world. As Coach 123 mentioned, "The language of sport is universal (...) the amount of successful foreign football coaches from different countries, languages and cultures working around the world is the proof that cross-cultural training is not a key factor for development." (Coach 123)

Table 1. Key theme 1 – Cross-cultural training needs in the global football market

Master theme	Subtheme	Examples of quotes
Needs	Perform at own best	"I believe it is always important to receive training when working with athletes from a different culture. For me, it's key to place them at the centre of the coaching process and look to create an environment for them to thrive and reach their potential." (Coach 99)
	Work abroad	"Coaches profession is increasingly globalized (...) working outside the country is becoming a possibility to me (...) so I need more skills to perform at my best (...)" (Coach 113)
	Global market	"There is a tendency for the world to become a single globalized culture. I think it would make sense to receive intercultural training, not only to work outside the country but also in my own country." (Coach 40)
No needs	No Time	"Normally there is no time to prepare your relocation to a new country and a new club." (Coach 303)
	Sufficient international experience	"(...) I have been training and working in many different cultures, countries and continents and I have never had any problems, neither in terms of adaptation nor understanding of another culture. Also, my parents, as emigrants, allowed me to grow up in a different culture. I always had contact with different cultures from a very young age." (Coach 26)
	No differences across countries	"...I think the coach already has a good understanding of the cultural aspects because his [or her] job is to manage individuals." (Coach 42)

Key theme 2: *Cross-cultural awareness is important in football*

In answer to the question *What training content do you feel you need and why?* Coaches perceived cross-cultural training as important for their development, despite most coaches not being fully aware of the topic (see table 2). For example, Coach 108 responded: "I have never participated in cross-cultural training, and I am not aware of the content." Coach 218, a Portuguese coach with previous migration experience, also mentioned: "It is a rare topic in coaches' training (...) this is the first time I am discussing this topic." Their view was that cross-cultural training could help them in their interactions with people from other cultures and should be included in the coaches' training programme "from level 1 to level 4 coaches." (Coach 32). As coach 56 mentioned:

I think that this would be a beneficial addition to the training programme for the majority of coaches and would help the drive to make the sport more

accessible for all members of the community, which will in turn help to improve cultural understanding and community cohesion.

However, it is worth pointing out that there were different views about the value of this type of training. According to the answers received, coaches believed that those who interact more often with foreigners would benefit the most from this type of training. For instance, Coach 21 a Portuguese coach with no migration experience, mentioned that this training would benefit "coaches working in their native country with foreign athletes", and Coach 115 a Portuguese coach with no migration experience wrote, "(...) coaches who intend to work abroad (...) because their sports' knowledge may be insufficient the challenges they will encounter." Although coaches had little knowledge about cross-cultural training, they suggested they should be able to evaluate their training needs themselves so they could have an informed decision on whether they need this type of training. For instance, Coach 26 mentioned that "(...) only for those who feel uncomfortable in a different culture (...) should definitely consider cross-cultural training if they want to work in a different culture."

Some coaches thought that cross-cultural training was not important either because their role, which involves constant interaction with other people (e.g., athletes, sports directors, parents), already prepares them to adapt to other cultural contexts (e.g., the culture that is specific of a foreign country), or because their own culture provides the necessary basis to adapt to other cultures. Coach 191 mentioned, "(...) I think we [coaches from the same country] have a great capacity to adapt to different scenarios, which facilitates our role in our native country or abroad."

Table 2. Key theme 2 – Cross-cultural awareness is important in football

Master theme	Subtheme	Examples of quotes
Important	Coaching knowledge	"I think that this would be a beneficial addition to the training programme for the majority of coaches and would make the sport more accessible

		for all, which will help to improve cultural understanding and group cohesion." (Coach 56)
	For all coaches	"(...) from level 1 to level 4 coaches." (Coach 32) "This type of training should be part of the comprehensive training of professional levels 3 and 4." (Coach 300)
	For some coaches	"I believe it is very important before coaches start their adventure abroad (...)" (Coach 286) "For coaches working in their native country with foreign athletes." (Coach 21)
Not important	Coaches adjust easily	"We [coaches] can adapt well and can easily perceive other cultures without having to do substantial and dull training." (Coach 36)

Key theme 3: *Football-specific cultural training*

In answer to the question *What are your views about cross-cultural training?* Table 3 identifies a division between general training and specific football training, with the last one being perceived as more prominent by the coaches. Coaches mentioned that the most important training content was related to the following areas: Coaching leadership styles; Sports nutrition in other cultures; Communication skills and; Cultural values and beliefs. Leadership was described as an important topic because coaches recognised the need to adapt their leadership style to different cultural contexts. Coach 63 mentioned that "cross-cultural training can be useful to establish the relationship between coaches and athletes (...) to adjust my game philosophy and to lead my team".

Cultural values and religious beliefs were also referred to by coaches as relevant topics. They would like to learn more about the traditions in other countries and be aware of their athletes' beliefs, so they can adjust accordingly. As Coach 221, who had migration experience, mentioned: "It is important to know the country's religion in case it is different from my own country (...) I have worked in countries where I was required to adapt to the host country's traditions." Also, coaches mentioned that it is crucial to know how to adapt their coaching methodology so they can manage their athletes equitably. For example, a coach referred to his experience working with athletes during Ramadan. Coach 119 mentioned that "(...) we have

to know their [foreign athletes'] culture in order to understand their views. (...) For example, some Muslim athletes during Ramadan may not be as productive as other athletes."

Communication skills were viewed as relevant for the training structure and for managing interactions with foreign sports stakeholders. In their view, it is important to communicate with their athletes and other stakeholders effectively to avoid misunderstandings. Therefore, learning/using a non-native language plays a crucial role as it allows coaches to express their views directly without using a translator.

Table 3. Key theme 3 – Football-specific cultural training

Master theme	Subtheme	Examples of quotes
Football specific	Coach leadership	"The more skilled you are to deal with people from different cultures the better coach and leader you will be." (Coach 138)
	Sport nutrition	"It is crucial to address the nutritional and cultural issues of other countries." (Coach 41)
	Communication skills	"Helps to develop the relationship between coaches and all those who are important to the club. It's important that when you are coaching in a foreign environment you do not jeopardise your job or your relationship with your athletes by offending or acting inappropriately." (Coach 71)
General	Language	"(...) we must make all the efforts to master at least one [other] language because it is essential to communicate well with your team (...) because sometimes translators are not able to pass the message with the same emphasis!" (Coach 286)
	Cultural values and religious beliefs	" (...) Technical knowledge in football is not enough, we also need to learn the local values, culture, education and behaviour of the country that hosts us, as well as the legal aspects, the religious and socio-economic aspects of the foreign country." (Coach 303)

Key theme 4: Training by migrant coaches, no matter how

In answer to the question *What training methods and forms of delivery would you prefer for your cross-cultural training?* there seemed to be a consensus that cross-cultural training should be delivered by experienced migrant coaches. However, no consensus as to the form of delivery, considering that some coaches identified theory-based forms of delivery and others identified practice-based forms of delivery (see table 4). For instance, Coach 38 who has no previous migration experience, suggested "video conference sessions to be held by a coach

working abroad" and for Coach 26, a German coach with previous migration experience, the sessions "should be delivered by people who have a lot of experiences in [coaching abroad]." Some coaches referred that this international experience should be specific to the country they would be working in; for instance, "delivered by coaches who are, or have been, and working in [the host country]." (Coach 191). Overall, migrant coaches were perceived as having a crucial role as training facilitators, because they would be able to help trainees better understand how to interact efficiently in a foreign country. Coach 32 mentioned that "practical sessions taught by migrants or coaches with experience in other countries, who would share with us their knowledge and experiences."

Coaches would also like to learn from other sports' stakeholders, such as journalists and mentioned online training. Meetings abroad were also regarded as an important interactive method of training, so that trainees have the opportunity to discuss topics related to football coaching face-to-face in a foreign country, and at the same time get the opportunity to reflect on their interactions with other cultures. As Coach 327, who has no migration experience, mentioned, "(...) with the Erasmus+ projects, I had the opportunity to lead teams while traveling and learn about foreign European countries." Hands-on methods were also considered important for coaches. Travel, in general, was viewed as an opportunity to be immersed in a new culture to understand it better. As Coach 300, who has no migration experience, mentioned it would be important to "have the opportunity to stay at least 15 days in the country and interact with the local community to understand the culture." Internships abroad or interchanges between coaches were also considered relevant. For example, shadowing experienced coaches in a club abroad to get international exposure was one of the suggestions mentioned by one coach. Coach 99 referred that "working with a coach who has great international experience would help me learn new skills and adapt my coaching style."

Table 4. Key theme 4 – *Training by migrant coaches, no matter how*

Master theme	Subtheme	Examples of quotes
Formal classes	Lectures, seminars and conferences	"Only face-to-face classes." (Coach 323)
Interactive classes	Migrant coaches	"Delivered by coaches who had previous experiences in foreign countries." (Coach 211)
	Media professionals	"Practical sessions with journalists." (Coach 153)
	Host country coaches	"Practical and theoretical training delivered by experts or natives from the respective country." (Coach 23)
Online	Meetings	"Meetings, exchange of experiences (...)." (Coach 40)
	e-learning	"Use of an online platform." (Coach 395)
Hands-on	Internet	"Nowadays the internet is a good place to gather the information we need to address our concerns (...)" (Coach 225)
	Travel	"Visit the new city to learn about the history of the country." (Coach 75)
	Coaching and mentoring	"Working with a coach who has great international experience would help me to learn new skills and to adapt my coaching style." (Coach 99)
	Internships	"Small internships that provide a real-life environment." (Coach 285)

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the cross-cultural training needs of football coaches in their interactions with foreign sports stakeholders in their own country or abroad. The results showed that coaches were aware of the need for cross-cultural training to maximise their career opportunities. Coaches rated learning methods based on interactive classes and hands-on approaches most favourably. The data showed that the strongest argument in favour of cross-cultural training was career opportunities and progression. Coaches were aware that globalisation is increasing rapidly, and they will need to adjust to different cultural contexts to maximise their career prospects (cf., Borges et al., 2015). Career arrangements such as contract length determine that elite football coaches need to continuously move across countries (Smith, 2016), and many coaches saw cross-cultural training as an opportunity to start their appointments better equipped. In contrast, some coaches believed their international experience already equipped them with sufficient cross-cultural skills. Worryingly, our findings also

showed that some coaches do not recognise cultural differences across countries, especially where it concerns sport contexts, which may indicate an ethnocentric perspective of the world (Fischer, 2011). Even top-level football coaches have difficulties interacting in different cultural contexts (Griggs & Gibbons, 2014) suggesting that everyone, regardless of their level, might benefit from cross-cultural training.

Coaches showed a preference for practice-based delivery done by migrant coaches which is in line with research on coach education (Mallett et al., 2009; Mesquita et al., 2014). This is also in line with research on students which found that formal training without international contact may have a negative impact on cross-cultural skills (Ott & Michailova, 2016). The authors suggest that the combination of formal training and international experience is essential for the overall development of cross-cultural skills. The results showed a preference for interactive and hands-on training which suggest a preference for experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). This is in agreement with previous studies on cross-cultural training (MacNab, 2012). It should allow the learner to engage in a relevant experience, reflect on the experience, use analytical skills to frame the experience, and apply lessons from the experience to other contexts and future actions (Callary et al., 2014; Cushion et al., 2012; Mesquita et al., 2014).

In relation to the cultural dimensions described in the Cultural Intelligence model (Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2012), the results indicate that coaches consider elements related to the motivational and cognitive dimensions. The cognitive dimension is referred by the coaches mainly to knowledge related to coach leadership styles, sports nutrition, cultural values, and religious beliefs. These could be related to some of the challenges that the coaches face when interacting with people from different cultures. Similarly, a previous study with global business managers also found that context-specific knowledge (e.g., country's history) was seen as relevant for interactions with people from different countries (Janssens & Cappell, 2008). The motivational dimension is also mentioned by the coaches, mainly the extrinsic

interest. Coaches were interested in having cross-cultural training to perform at their own best, work abroad, and in the global market. This could be related to fewer opportunities to work in their native country and the need to work abroad (Borges et al., 2020). The results also indicate that coaches slightly overlook the elements related to the metacognition and behavioural dimensions. There is a lack of reference to developing action plans, knowing about cultural thinking and knowledge of self and others, reviewing assumptions, and adjusting to new experiences. These metacognition elements seem to be neglected by the coaches. Similarly, only a few business managers were able to identify the need for this dimension and its elements (Janssens & Cappell, 2008). Regarding the behavioural dimension, there are some references to the importance of learning the language and communication skills. However, these seem to be related only to verbal behaviour and less to non-verbal behaviour and speech acts which do play important roles in coaching. These can be considered essential for coaches' interactions with athletes from other countries. For instance, coaches should be able to adapt their non-verbal behaviour (e.g., how close or far they should be from the athletes) and their speech acts (e.g., the way they should agree/disagree with their athletes; Van Dyne et al., 2012) when interacting with athletes and colleagues from different cultures.

This study has some limitations that may guide future research efforts. First, the sample may not have been sufficiently diverse. For example, no efforts were made to include female coaches specifically, and no information was gathered about the ethnic diversity of the sample. However, this could also reflect the lack of diversity that might exist among football coaches. Similarly, the analysis brought up the issue of coaches who grew up in a host country, raising the question of whether they would be better equipped in terms of cross-cultural training. The use of qualitative surveys may also offer a brief overview of the needs of the coaches compared to interviews.

We suggest that future studies should analyse potential differences between coaches from different countries. The use of interviews allows to question and check participants' responses to identify more in-depth the needs that may not be clear to the participants (North et al., 2020). Finally, during recruitment, the researchers contacted several football associations, training providers, and UEFA, and felt that these conversations raised the awareness of different stakeholders on the topic of cross-cultural training in football. Future studies should explore the perceptions of these stakeholders regarding cross-cultural training about policies and practices.

Conclusion

It is important to explore the cross-cultural training needs of football coaches in their interactions with foreign sports stakeholders in their own country or abroad. This research examined what football coaches perceive as their cultural training needs when interacting with foreign sports stakeholders to inform the development of training programmes that support the cultural adaptation of coaches. Most coaches perceived a benefit from cultural training in preparation for international appointments, but some felt that coaches already had cultural awareness because they manage individuals and because they feel that coaches adjust easily to different cultures. This result indicates that cross-cultural training is perceived as particularly important by coaches planning to work abroad. The implication is that coach education programmes should include content that provides coaches with the knowledge and skills for their careers abroad. It is also important to consider that also coaches working in their native country, interacting with multicultural teams, might also need training about this content, considering that they are also responsible for the adjustment of foreign players to a new cultural context. Cross-cultural training would be best delivered by migrant coaches with a football-specific focus. This is something that was mentioned by the coaches who participated in the

study, so it could be well accepted by other coaches in the delivery of the training programme. Looking to migrant coaches' experiences could be a good way for other coaches to engage on the cross-cultural training programmes. We suggest topics related to coaches' migration, national identity, and cultural intelligence could be relevant for the training programme. This could be fundamental for the development of the coach's awareness about the topic and could make think, plan and adjust their behaviour better when interacting with people from other cultural contexts. This is the first study to explore the perceptions of football coaches about cross-cultural awareness and training needs and provides insights to providers of coach education. It is important that more studies are conducted to develop this topic further.

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