



Bacheloroppgave

IDR600 Sport Management

**Does mobility of football players influence the success
of the national team
- "Feet-exchange"**

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Preface

First, and foremost I would like to give my supervisor Birnir Egilsson a lot of credit for putting up with me throughout the process of this study. Without the guidance and his persistent backing, I am not sure if this study ever would have been completed within time.

Further, I would also like to thank the all the people within the Norwegian FA for providing everything needed for finishing this research. A special thank you goes out to the people within the transfer section at the FA.

At last, I am also thankful for all the support from my friends and family.

Abstracts

This research look to examine if there is a relation between the mobility of footballers and the success of the national team. This study further uses two specific theories. The first theory applied in the paper is the "knowledge spillover" theory. Grossman & Helpman developed the theory in 1990. The second theory proposed within this study is the theory of "feet-exchange", the theory was used in a survey on English Premier Academies League by Elliot & Weedon in 2010. The theory is commonly referred to as "brain-exchange" or "brain-circulation", and is often used among studies related to accounting, law and finance. Furthermore, this study applies qualitative interviews and enables a phenomenological approach to the data analysis to answer this papers research question: Does mobility of footballers influence the success of the national team.

- "feet-exchange"

Keywords: Migration of footballers, national team, feet-exchange and knowledge spillover

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Does Mobility of Football Players Influence the Success of the National Team

– Feet Exchange

Introduction

For many kids growing up these days one of their biggest dreams is to one day attire their nation's symbolic national jersey. Football is the most popular sport in Norway with over 369 000 practicing the sport, that is twice as many as our second most popular sport cross-country skiing (Statistisk sentralbyrå 2014). For a decade the Norwegian national A-team men ranked among the best football nations in the world, they recorded their best ever placement on the FIFA ranking. FIFA is the legislative body of football and was founded back in 1904, and in 1993 and 1995 Norway ranked as the second best national team in the world (FIFAA, 2015).

During the 90's the national team also qualified for several international championships. Both in 94 and 98 the team managed to qualify for the World Cup championship, and in 00 the team also qualified for the European championship. Previously the Norwegian national team had not qualified for a championship playoff in the post-world war II era. (FIFAB, 2015: UEFAb, 2015). It's worthwhile mentioning that statistically the Norwegian team qualified for a "playoff" playing in the round of 16, but there were no qualification needed for the first ever European Championship held in France in the 1960's, and there were only the total of 18 teams competing for the championship (UEFAc, 2015).

Throughout the best period in 1990s', the Norwegian national team had as many as twenty seven players who played at least one competitive match during the English Premier League (EPL) season. On average from 92 – 02 Norway recorded 16, 5 players (see fig. 1.) who played at least one match in each season from 92 – 02 (TV2, 2012). After years with good results the team experiencing weaker results and their performances was not as the Norwegian people had come to be accustomed to, in fact the Norwegian national team have not qualified for a playoff since 2000.

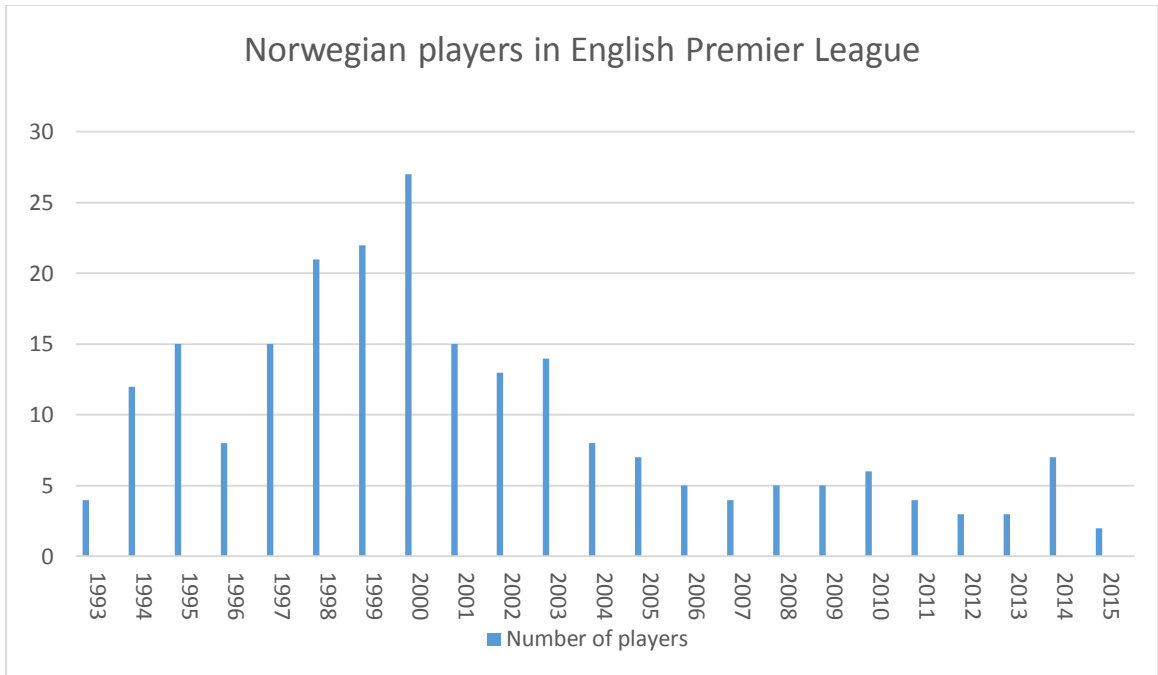


Figure 1: Norwegian players in Premier League (TV2, 2012)

Todays' situation reflects a rather frightening development of Norwegian players playing abroad. In the English Premier League (EPL) the Norwegians' have gone from a total of 27 players (see fig. 1.), to only recording 8 as its highest total amount of players playing at least one competitive match in EPL in the period from 02-12. Studying the average numbers of players from 2002 – 2012 playing in the EPL the number is significant lower, only an average of 5 players played in EPL from 02-12, a drastic change of scenery from its best days back in the 90's (TV2, 2012).

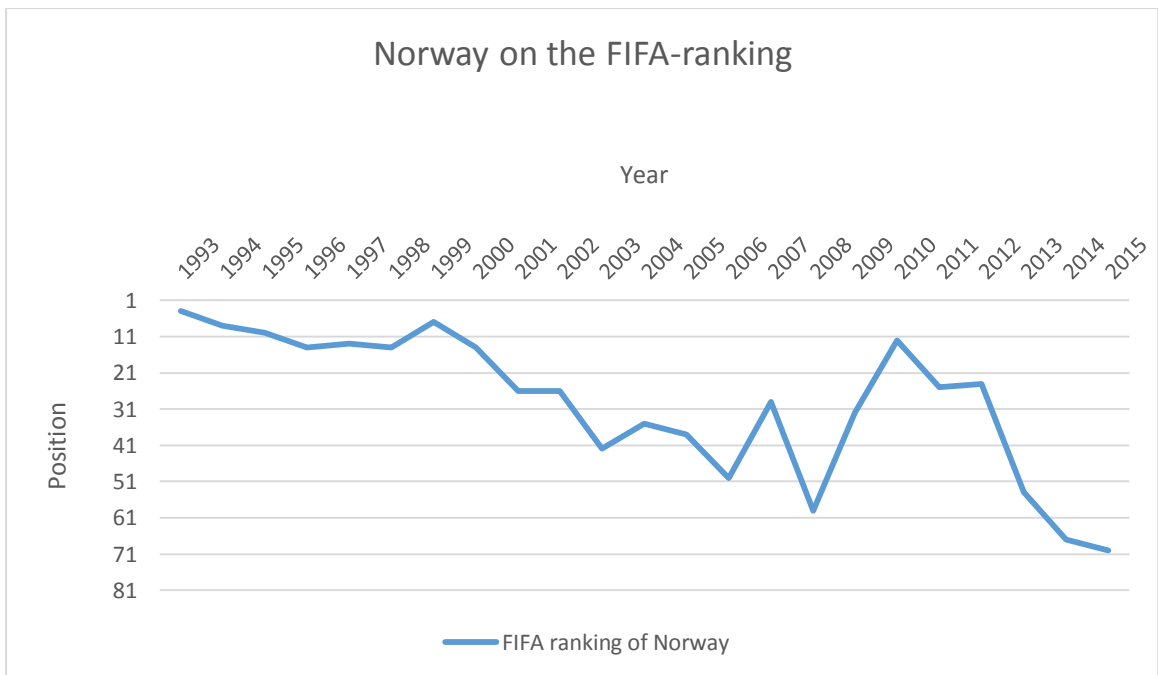


Figure 2: Historical view of Norway's placement on the FIFA ranking since the start in 1993 (FIFA, 2015)

In 2015 Norway sits at its worst FIFA-ranking position since back in 93, currently ranked as the world's 70th best football nation in the world behind nations such as The United Arab Emirates and Burkina Faso (FIFAc, 2015).

Through this paper the aim is to provide an overview of the current state of Norwegian football. Why is the Norwegian national team falling down the FIFA ranking? Why are there fewer Norwegians playing abroad in larger leagues in Europe? and the key question that really summarizes this study: Is the lack of transfer activity among Norwegian players in recent time a key reason for the poor result of the Norwegian national team? The purpose of the study is to examine if migration of footballers is vital to the success of the Norwegian national team. Previous work done by Elliot & Weedon (2010) and their theory related to transaction of talent will be utilized to give insight and understanding to the development and the direction the Norwegian football is headed. By analysing relevant transfer data and present statistics towards central coaches and leaders of Norwegian football through interviews I intend to answer this papers research question: *Does mobility of football players influence the success of the national team?*

The reminder of this paper is structured as follows, the first section provide some background for the study. Secondly a litterature review is submitted. Therafter this studies theoretical framework with information regarding the "feet-exchange" theory is demonstrated. Detailed illustration of the papers methodology is covered in chapter four. Subsequently, the results and the emperical data is provided and discussed, before the paper is finished with a summary in chapter six.

Background

In the modern game of football clubs rely heavily on transfer activity of footballers to create success. The Norwegian national have since the late 90's early 00's witnessed regressing results. To better understand these development, an understanding of the modern transfer market is of importance. Maguire and & Stead (1998) points to the fact that elite labour migration is now an established feature of the modern game. The migration of talented players is found within nation-states, between nation-states on the same continent and beyond their own continent (Elliot & Maguire. 2008). Historically this is not a new phenomenon, it is rather an extension of previous migration patterns and historical factors that go back hundreds of years. The patterns are often linked up to the countries earlier history, meaning there is a link between social, cultural and their

historical roots, hence colonisation (Taylor. 2007; Richardson et al. 2012). This is supported by Maguire & Pearton (2000) research when examining the feed of talents into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese clubs who almost exclusively recruits players from other “Latin” countries such as Brazil and Argentina, these stereotypes of players are believed to fit the mould better than players from Western European nations. According to Maguire & Pearton this is due to the easier lifestyle transmission, with common language and culture, also the likes of the individual and flamboyant playingstyle is more suited for these leagues compared to the northern European leagues. However the transfers of footballers would not have found place as we see it today without the actions of a virtually unknown Belgian footballer Jean-Marc Bosman. He challenged the international (FIFA) and European (UEFA) football governing bodies systems when his contract back in 1990 expired. When Bosman was not allowed to proceed his transfer from the Belgian club RC Liège to the French club Dunkerque, Bosman filed a lawsuit against both the Belgian FA and Liège including UEFA and FIFA in his lawsuit. Bosman challenged the legality of the transfer system and the rules of nationality quotas. The verdict fell in 1995 stating that no organizations on behalf of national authorities, however well intended, had the right to hinder the free movement of labour across EU borders (García. 2007).

As a consequence of the Bosman judgment European football experienced increased transfer activity among clubs (Littlewood et al. 2011). The increased prevalence of transfer activity among European clubs subsequently saw an increased number of Norwegian footballers migrating to larger European leagues (see fig. 1). From the verdict in 95 until 00’s Norway went from having 15 players within the EPL to 27 five years later. However throughout the 00’s the number of Norwegian footballers playing within the EPL is immensely regressing. In 2015 only 2 Norwegian players are currently within the league. The drop within Norwegian talent plying their talent among the elite footballers in the larger European leagues is also evident when studying the past decade of Norwegian player transfers.

Review of relevant literature

Outline

The purpose of this study is to examine if the mobility of Norwegian footballers influence the success of the national team. In this endeavor I intend to draw upon theory developed by Elliot & Weedon (2010). To further study if the success is dependent on mobility another model is accounted for. The “knowledge spillover” model established through the work of

Grossman & Helpman (1990) will also be provide. Before more information regarding the theories, I intend to provide relevant historical statistics regarding the past dacade of Norwegian players transfers.

Norwegian players transferring abroad



Figure 3: Complete review of Norwegian player transfers from 2005-2015

(Numbers gathered from the Norwegian FA's transfer archive)

In the study of the mobility among Norwegian footballers me the researcher have reviewed all of the transfer among Norwegian footballer for the past ten years. Approximately 20 000 transfers occur within Norwegian football annually. For a player to be counted as suitable for this research he had to be playing in one of the three first divisions in Norwegian football. He had to transfer abroad, meaning from a Norwegian division to a foreign division. Further the footballer also had to receive a professional contract when transferring. A total of 181 Norwegian footballers were found suitable for this study. A player transfer could be counted for more than once. For example one Norwegian youngster Magnus Wolf Eikrem transferred from Molde FK to Manchester United FC. Thereafter Eikrem joined and signed for his previous club Molde FK, before he was transferred again after a couple seasons to the Dutch club Heerenveen FC.

Figure 3 showcases a complete review of the Norwegian footballers transferring abroad the past ten years. As revealed in the figure, the table suppose a increased number of Norwegian footballers transferring abroad the past decade. In 2005 only 13 players went on

to play abroad, whereas in 2014 26 players transferred. Also worth mentioning is the numbers provided for 2015. Since the summer transfer window of 2015 is not yet done for these thesis, statistics regarding 2015 only showcases the transfer activity from January. Therefore the numbers are likely to increase for the 2015 year once the transfer activity is done in August.

To further examine the statistics among Norwegian player transfers each destination for the player transfer is submitted.

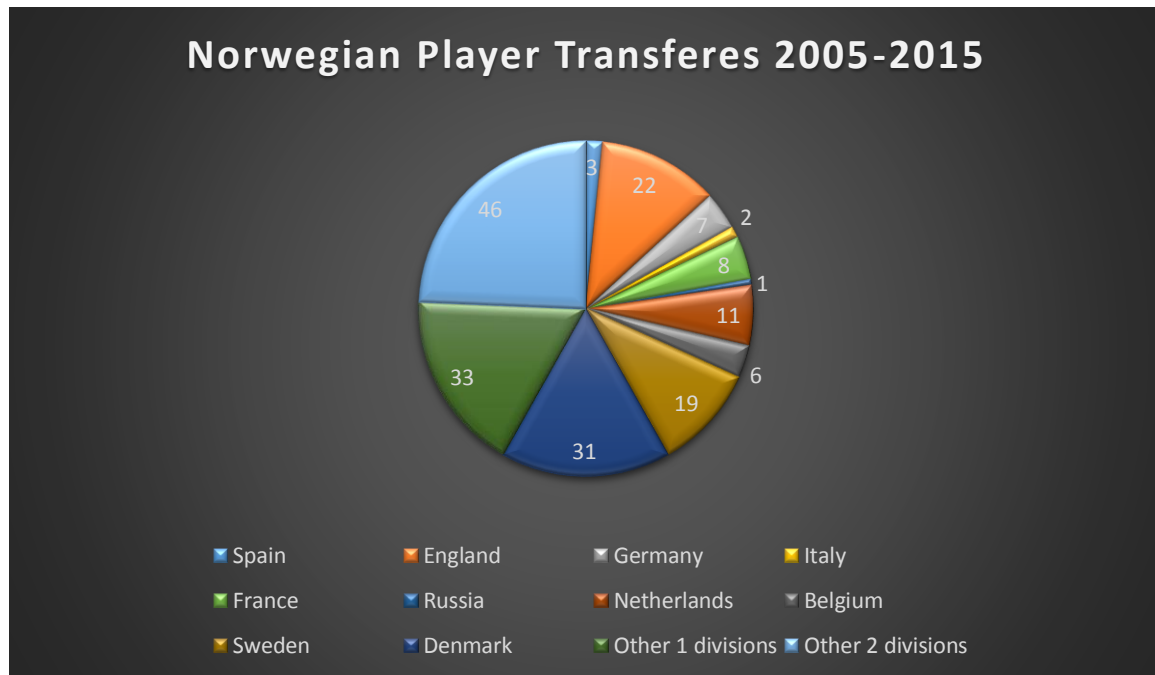


Figure 4: Transfer destination for the Norwegian footballers the past decade

(Statistics gathered from the Norwegian FA's transfer archive)

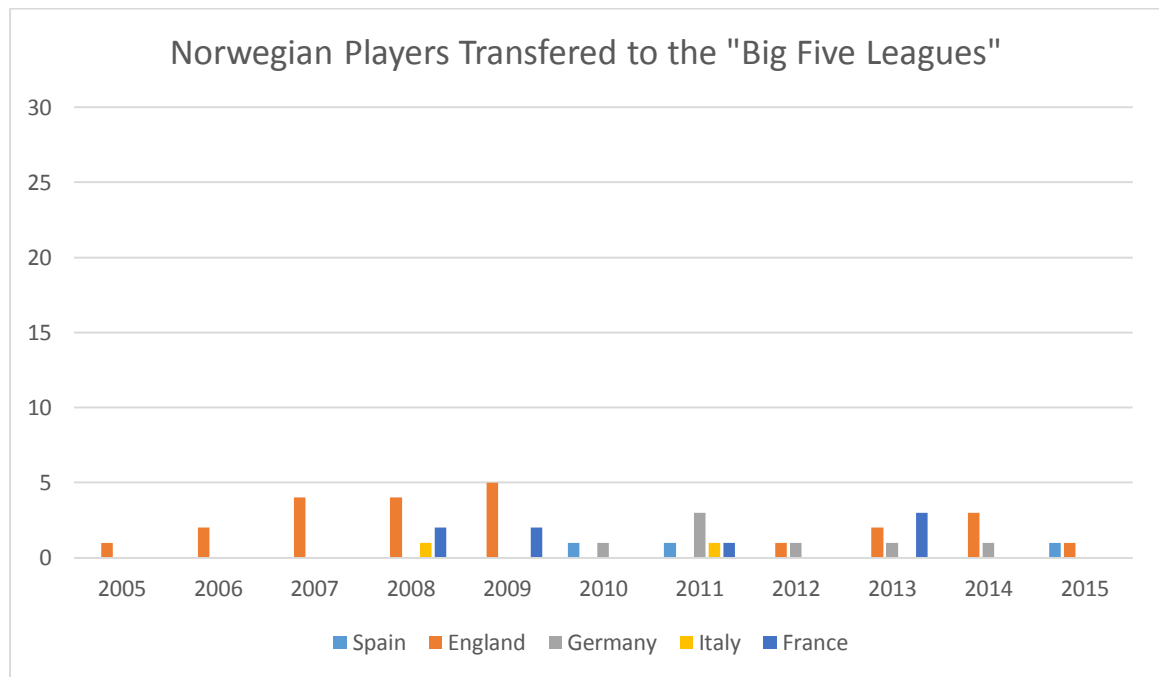
Figure 4 showcases a complete overview of Norwegian players moving abroad to play professional football for the past decade. According to the 2015 UEFA ranking (UEFAa 2015) the countries represented in this table is the top 10 leagues within Europe. The UEFA – ranking is a system that rank the strenght of each European nations national league. Since Norway had no players migrating to play within the Portuguese or Ukrainian league, they are removed from the table. Beacause a large portion of Norwegian players transfer to other Scandinavian leagues, the likes Sweden and Denmark is also found in the table. The “other 1 and 2 division” represents nations outside of the top 10 in the UEFA-ranking. A player transferring to Spain but not in the nations top division, would be represented in “other 2 division” column.

The table suggest that although a large portion of Norwegian players is tranfering abroad, many of these players transfers to countries outside of UEFA's top 10 leagues. This is easily supported by the fact that the most common destination for a Norwegian footballer is "other 2 divisions". Next on most common nations for tranfers is the Danish league, followed by "other 1 divisions". In fact 110 transfers out of 181 tranfers is represented only within these 3 pillars, that equals to a total of 61 % of all Norwegian players transferring abroad.

The "big-five" leagues

According to Richardson et al. (2012) the "big five" leagues is represented by Spain, England, Germany, Italy and France. These nations represent the economical strongholds of European football (Magure & Pearton. 2000; Richardson et al. 2012). These nation alone invest substantial amounts of money to succeed and harvest the glory of being among the best team's in the world. In the 2014/2015 season alone these nations alone spent a total of 2.366.033.120 £ with the EPL spending the highest amount with a total of 1.061.566.880 £ (Transfermarket 2015)

The huge financial benefits by competing in the major leagues where TV recently showcased with the new TV deal completed within the EPL. The deal is set to a record breaking 5.1 billion £ (Indepent UK. 2015). With the large amounts of money flowing within the European leagues, and high economical rewards for succeeding the clubs have also expanded their level of player recruitment. Previous studies (see: Maguire & Pearton. 2000; Darby & Solberg. 2010; Ribeiro & Dimeo. 2010) suggest that there are certainly evidence of a large recruitment of players from east of Europe, South-America and Africa to the European leagues. The enlarged recruitment of players from these league have according to (Darby & Solberg. 2010) set back the donor nations. The donor nation is the nation that part with its talent, and as a consequence of the systematical recruitment these leagues is indeed facing a "deskilling" of the nations national leagues (Riberiro & Dimeo. 2010; Richardson et al. 2012). The rising number of migration is further supported towards the EPL. The numbers of foreign footballers imported is vastly increasing. In fact for the 2014/2015 EPL season the teams competing registered only a total amount of 35% indigenous players. In other words 65% of players playing in the EPL is not of English residence (Premier League, 2015). Although economical growth and vast expansion of player recruitment within the major leagues in Europe, there are smaller quantity of Norwegian footballers transferring abroad into Europes "big-five" leagues.



*Figur 5: Norwegian player transferes to the «big five leagues»
(Numbers gathered from the Norwegian FA archive)*

Figure 5 represents the number of Norwegian migrating to the to “big-five” nations. As the content reflects there are few Norwegian transferring into these leagues. These numbers also represent Norwegian players migrating into the academies for the “big-five” leagues. In other words, the number of Norwegian footballers transferring to play among the elite is even worse than what it is reflected in the figure.

Further these results of the modern recruitment pattern of the European clubs is also visible within the Norwegian national team’s latest squad selection. The player material available for “Drillo”, the head coach of Norway’s best period in the 90’s, was of another level when speaking of continental experience. In the line-up from the famous team who beat the Brazilians back in the 1998 World Championship in France, the starting XI where represented with 10 of 11 players playing abroad, whereas 9 of the players represented clubs from the “big-five” leagues. In the latest squad presented by current national team head coach Per Mathias Høggmo, the starting XI where represented by 8 players playing abroad, but only 4 of them representing clubs from the “big five leagues”.

Why is that? Are the Norwegian players not good enough? Is the players satisfied when playing home in their local league? Could this be the reason for the national team facing poor results?

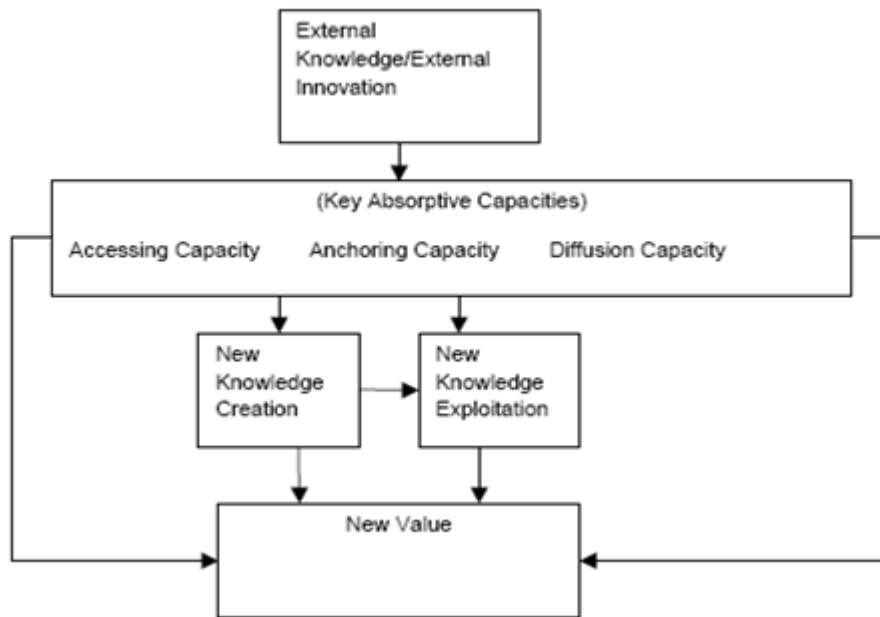
Theoretical Framework

In this chapter this thesis theoretical framework is presented. For this study I've utilized the theory of "knowledge spillovers" from the work of Grossman & Helpman (1990) as well as Elliot and Weedson (2010) "feet-exchange" theory.

Knowledge Spillover

In the 1990's Grossman and Helpman studied the theory of knowledge spillover within the industrial sector. Knowledge being an inherent resource in all research and development projects within the industrial sector. With development of new technologies and a more global labour market, the knowledge obtained within an organization easily exchanges through the organizations pathway, and further its knowledge is exploited to new areas of the industrial sector (Beaverstock. 2004). Therefore a growing confusion of knowledge spillovers occur and a rapid development of the industry is prominent. To be more specific the intention is to examine if there is a correlation within the export of players abroad, and the performances to the Norwegian national team. The idea being that an increased number of players migration abroad will expose themselves to a greater level of football, and in an ideal setting this would increase the capability of the player to acquire an overall better level as a footballer. This knowledge spillover is also referred to as "human capital" (Khadira. 2001; Elliot & Maquire, 2008). The exchange of human capital within highly skilled migration workers have been studied within various fields, in ex. Banking sectors, information technology (IT), law and accountancy (see, Beaverstock. 2004; Iredale. 2001; Khadira. 2001). See figure 6 "adaptation of knowledge", the figure visualize how human capital or knowledge is being transferred and adapted between organizations and its employees. When external knowledge is brought into an organization Grossman & Helpman view these persons as an external source of knowledge. This sources of knowledge is then transferred further into the existing capacity of the firm. Both parties the internal and external resource acknowledge each sides values and exchange and adapt both

parties “human capital” to retrieve a greater level of knowledge (Grossman & Helpman, 1990).



Figur 6: Adaptation of knowledge (Mahroum et al. 2008)

“Feet-exchange”

In their studies from 2010 Elliot & Weedon explores the EPL’s football academy. Elliot & Weedon’s study look to explore what effect player imigration have on the indigenious talent, more specifically Elliot & Weedon research if the indigenious talent is affected in postitive or negative ways when being prone to foreign footballers and different cultures. To research the phenomenon of “feet-exchange” theory Elliot & Weedon conducted interview with several premier leaders and coaches within the different EPL academies. Like knowledge spillover “feet- exchange” theory is inherited from previous studies in other fields. The term is more commonly referred to as “brain-exchange” or “brain-circulation” (Beaverstock, 2004). Within the game of football the “feet-exchange” theory builds upon the same philosophies as knowledge spillovers. Knowledge within the game of football could be expressed as general attribute assets, and the theory expresses an exchange of these assets from one footballer to another (Richardson et al. 2012; Elliot & Weedon. 2010). The principles of the theory states that if a player is surrounded by greater talented players at a higher level, the player enhances his/her possibility for reaching their maximum potential. Moreover a potential transfer abroad for a Norwegian footballer likely increases the standard of the staff surrounding the footballer, it will possibly create more

international matching and also offer better training facilities and a more professional environment to develop within

Academy directors in the EPL frequently enables the term of “feet-exchange” when defending the large quantity of players migrating into the academies. The directors emphasises the value of bringing foreign talented players into academy, when acquiring the foreign talented players the directors vision is to improve the standard of the indigenous talents. Transaction of “knowledge” or attributes between the indigenous player and the foreign player, as well as different approaches to the game, is set to enhance the attributes of both the indigenous player and the foreign player (Elliot & Weedon. 2010).

One of the academy director’s states:

“What we are looking to do is to push the indigenous boys to see how far they can go. The better quality players they’ve got around them will determine whether they’ve got those extra gears. So if you can get a good quality foreign player in and he can have this positive effect by raising the standards, raising the bar, then that has to be good” (Elliot & Weedon. 2010 p. 69).

This study wants to find out if the lack of Norwegian players abroad could be the reason for lack of results for national team, using the theoretical concepts knowledge spillover and feet exchange. The fact that there is a decreasing amount of Norwegian players being exposed to better talented players is concern for Norwegian football. According to the study of Elliot & Weedon being exposed to better players enhances the possibility for progression for a footballer. Therefor an increased number of Norwegian footballer within the top European football leagues possibly could strenghten the the weak result in the past.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to see if mobility of footballers influence the success of the national team. This chapter look to outline the methodology conducted within this research.

Approach

For this particularly study I’ll be utilizing a qualitative approach to the data collection, and a phenomenological approach to the data analysis. The reason for enabling a qualitative approach instead of a quantitative approach is the possibility the qualitative approach offers the author by applying in depth knowledge of the research question through observation, interviews or case studies. This type of research usually takes place with few

participant or informants, and the approach does not intend to be used as an attempt to generalization to the rest of the public, but rather gain a deeper understanding about the problem your exploring (Jacobsen. 2005)

The thesis does not intend to apply a phenomenological approach throughout the whole extend of the study. Due to the fact that not all of the participants appearing in the research have lived and experienced the phenomena of migration. Experiencing the phenomena is essential since the phenomenological approach is an understanding of the participants experience within the lived phenomena (Lester. 1999). On the other hand the individuals taking part in this study have years of experience within the top international level of football, as well as years of experience from running the Norwegian FA. All of the participants have great knowledge within the field, but not all of them have experienced the phenomena of migration and played football outside of Norway themselves. Therefore qualitative interviews will be conducted for data gathering and phenomenological approach used to analyse the data. Interviews is the ideal approach to attempt to answer the papers research question. The opportunity interviews offer by applying in depth insights together with its participants on key aspects of the reseachers problem, likely enhances the possibility for a researcher to answer the research question. The interviews conducted within this particular research is done one on one with a semi-structured interview guide made pre-handily (see interview guide attachment).

Participants

The qualitative approach offers a possibility of selecting the ideal participants, the participants that are more likely to answer the concepts you seek to explore. Therefore the participant in this research where not chosen randomly, but instead they were selected due to their great knowledge of Norwegian football and understanding of the papers research question (Dale. 1996). The participants that appear in this paper have all lifelong experiences within Norwegian football, either as a player, a coach or as an employee in Norwegian football federation.

With a qualitative approach it is inconvenient to assemble a large quantity of participants because it would gather immense amounts of data. Therefor in my research I have conducted a total amount 5 interviews. This should gather enough data to get an understanding and also provide the researcher with the possibility to discuss key areas

connected to the research question. Due to an insignificant amount of participant in this study generalization would not be suitable (Jacobsen. 2005).

Interview process

An interview can best be described as conversation between the researcher and the respondent or informant. The data that is being collected can be gathered through words, sentences or stories. An interview is most commonly known for being held person to person, but can also occur by phone, via internet programs, or e-mail (Jacobsen. 2005)

The interviews varied from 25 minutes to an hour. In my interviews I enhanced the participants to speak freely about the topic, as a researcher my intention was to be a good listener and not put words into the participants' mouth. This was to enable the participant to talk in depth about their experience in the field. I also encourage the participants to take "control of the interview", so they could reflect freely their attitudes and experiences relevant to the research.

Phenomenological Data Analysis

When utilizing a phenomenological approach to analysis the data provided within a study the process is similar for all psychological phenomenologists (Moustakas. 1994; Polkinghorne. 1989). Interviews and texture herby is represented by the word data. When you enable a phenomenological approach to your analysis the steps you follow is conceptualized as follow. First an for most you analyse and go through the data you've gathered, within this step the researcher first listen to the tapes recorded, between three to four hours recordings was conductet within this study. Thereafter a transcript from each of the participants individual interviews was written. Furhtermore I have highlighted significant statement from the transcripts, the statements highlighted was related to the research question. When the significant statements is highlighted the researcher groupes the statements, and formulate categories where the statement is sorted. These significant statements and categories are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced (textural descriptions). From the interviews and textural descriptions, the researcher then formulates a description that presents the "essence" of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence). It is a descriptive passage, a long paragraph or two, and the reader should experience the feeling, "*I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that*" after reading the data analysis (Polkinghorne. 1989. p. 46).

The phenomenological data analysis procedure is better explained in figure 7. Here the all the steps within the research is easily conceptualized. According to Colaizzi (1978) should be checked with the participants was skipped. This was due to the fact that the participants within this research was anonymous, therefore I found this step not as relevant.

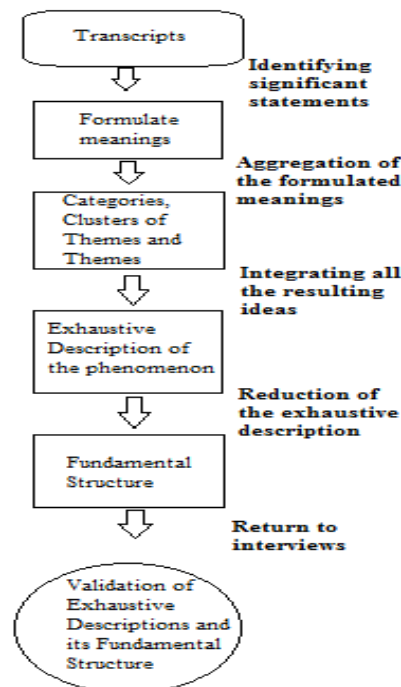


Figure 7: Illustrates the descriptive phenomenological data analysis process (Creswell. 2007. P. 270-271)

Trustworthiness

To secure the participants taking part in the research it is of importance to clarify their ethical implications. All the participants in this study participated voluntarily. At the beginning of each interview the participant were informed of the interview being recorded on tape, and also guaranteed confidentiality. The participant where also given the rights to inform the researcher at any time if they would like to withdraw from the study. The reason for this action was to insure the participants' credibility and dependability (Leedy & Ormroad. 2010 p. 100-102).

Results and Discussion

In this section the intention is to highlight the significance of statements the participants stated through the interview phase.

The “feet-exchange” theory

Before being presented the statistics for the recent transfer activity among Norwegian players, the participants were questioned about the hypothesis within the theory presented by Elliot & Weedon. 2010.

“The theory presented reflects an optimal situation for a Norwegian footballer. Being exposed to and daily engage within a top quality environment establishes a great foundation for a player to enhance their abilities as a footballer”.

“The theory and hypothesis itself I find relevant, if you want to develop and nurture your talent you need to compete and challenge your talent constantly against more gifted talents. From my perspective, this means that you at “all time” need to involve yourself as a footballer with players that are at a greater level than yourself. The more often you are capable of challenging your talent, the more likely it is to fulfil your potential as a player”.

If we look at these statements, the theoretical concepts used in this study is definitely relevant. A great deal of the Norwegian players playing for the national team today (11 included in last team selection) is playing home in the national league, in other Scandinavian leagues or in second tire divisions out in Europe. These players are not experiencing feet-exchange at highest level. One of the participants specifically referred to the situation of Martin Ødegaard, a Norwegian youngster recently bought from the Norwegian club Strømsgodset IF and transferred to one of the worlds largest club Real Madrid CF.

“Being 16 years of age and daily compete with the quality of the 1st team to Real Madrid CF is a perfect situation to develop as a young footballer. The day it becomes a crisis for a young Norwegian footballer to train with the 1st team of a club with the stature of Real Madrid CF but compete and play matches at their 2nd tire team we should all take our hats and leave”.

The situation of Martin Ødegaard is somewhat the perfect scenario to expose Elliot & Weedons (2010) theory. According to their “feet-exchange” study players will be more likely to reach their maximum potential if they face more excelled personnel daily in their training, the situation with Ødegaard seem to be the ideal place for a young footballer if we use the theory accordingly. Enabling Grossman & Helpman (1990) model (see fig. 6) we

can also with most certainty guarantee that Ødegaard is acquiring external knowledge from his more talented players. With the new knowledge creation, Ødegaard is expected from his surroundings to take leaps as a player with time and overall reach a higher level as a player and producing value for the club. With Ødegaard taking steps as a footballer he could return to the Norwegian national teams training ground and expose the rest of the group to a higher intensity game and again raise the bar for the rest of the Norwegians.

Norwegians transferring abroad

The general understanding from the participants was that the numbers provided related to the total transfers of Norwegian players abroad, (see fig. 3) was infact misleading. The very fact that currently the Norwegians are exporting more players than previously is not apparent with the results appearing on the international scene. Participants interviewed within the survey of the mobility of Norwegian footballers found the table contenting the Norwegian footballers destination (see fig. 4) more of an interest than the general number of transfer. Figure 4 reveals the destination of the Norwegian players. The most common destination being the other Scandinavian countries and other 2nd Divisions, in other words a division not being the best within its country. The participants contended:

“Seeing players with bright futures ahead of themselves opting to transfer to other similar ranked leagues or even Norwegian internationals transferring to second tire divisions (Ruben Yttergård Jenssen and Even Hovland) makes me question the career advisors of the players, I’m certainly not sure whether this is the right path for a Norwegian international”.

“From my experience the general Norwegian footballer is too eager to take the step out to the larger European clubs. The players must give more thoughts to the future of their careers and question themselves if this is the correct career path. Too many of our exported players is not playing on their European sides. Good salary is all well, but a good wage should not come ahead of playing time”.

According to the theory of Elliot & Weedon (2010) and Richardson et al. (2012) a player must be surrounded by more gifted footballers to make new leaps as a footballer. And as one of the participants stated above, it is the training and match day environment that

challenges the talents. Every day will improve the players' capability to fulfil his potential. Albeit there is no certainty a Norwegian international player will meet these requirements when competing at second tier clubs, in fact you can argue that as an international player you should be dominant at this level. With you being the most gifted footballer the chances of the player to develop and become a better footballer decreases according to the theory presented. Further there is certainly the possibility of arguing that the players are not good enough to compete at a higher level, therefore a large quantity of Norwegian is transferring abroad to other 2nd divisions. Even though the players transfer to minor leagues, one participant further stated:

"I'm not certain the quality of the top Norwegian league is of a better level than take for example the German 2nd Bundesliga. From my personal experiences visiting the player at the clubs, the training culture the player faces regularly is in fact better and more professional than most of the clubs in our national division".

According to the participant, the Norwegian players still get a better and more professional environment when transferring abroad to leagues such as the German 2nd Bundesliga, but this is not a level considered nowhere near the "big-five" leagues, and the player is still not undergoing "feet-exchange" at the top level.

The Norwegian national league

The argument stated in the last section is worth mentioning. One central leader within the Norwegian FA spoke freely of the quality of the Norwegian league, arguing that:

"The quality of the Norwegian league is something we reflect upon often when discussing if a player have what it takes to play for the national team. This is due to the fact that when a player perform quality matches in the Norwegian league we simply do not know how this performance would match up on the international arena".

Throughout the interviews the state of the Norwegian league was a common visited theme when discussing the mobility of the players. For the Norwegian teams to produce better players and have more transfers to higher reputed leagues there were some opinions among the participants about today's league system.

“The current league system needs a rework. From my knowledge Norway is the league in Europe that have the largest top division corresponding to number of teams related to total amount of inhabitants. I’m a believer of cutting from the current series of 16 teams down towards 10 or 12 teams.”

The transfer market and agents

When researching the mobility of the Norwegian players I’ve also analysed the development of the more modern transfer market. This I find of relevancy because changes might have effected transfers of Norwegian players. Through interviews the participants where asked questions about the development of the European transfer market:

“One of the reasons to the lack of Norwegian footballers moving abroad to play within the EPL is the very fact that we no longer rule the agency market, when Norway were represented with 27 players in the EPL we also had Europe’s top agent”.

More than one of the participant mention this as the main reason for the lack of mobility of Norwegian players to the elite leagues within Europe. According to the participants Rune Hauge was a Norwegian agent had an immense network connection inside Europe’s elite football clubs. When Norway had most of its internationals playing for big clubs out in Europe, Hauge was the man responsible for the majority of the transfers. Besides the change of agency market the participants also pointed to the change of demands within the European market.

“The lack of Norwegians moving abroad to play within the “top leagues” in Europe, is connected to the change of demand on the European market. In the 90’s clubs almost without exclusions recruited players based within their own nations or from the Scandinavian countries. Today the situation in the European transfer market is of a whole new level. The market is of a global scale, and clubs recruit players from all parts of the world.

The statement suggested above is supported by the research conducted by Maguire & Pearton (2000). The vast growth of players migrating to the financial core of European football have created an even more difficult path to the elite level of European football. He further added:

“The price for the Norwegian footballers is not reflecting the value of the footballer the foreign club receive. In general the prices demanded from the Norwegian clubs is disadvantageous to the possibility for export of Norwegian players. He further added: Why should a club pay twice the amount for a Norwegian player when they can get the same out of an African, Asian or South American footballer?”

Stated goal through NFF’s action plan:

Participants were asked questions related to the goals stated by the Norwegian FA through their action plan released for the time period of 2012-2015. The Norwegian FA stated: “Norway at all-time should rank among the world’s 25 best football nations, and that Norway on regular basis will have 15-20 players playing frequently out in the 10 best ranked leagues in Europe” (Norges Fotballforbund 2015) (football.no, 2015).

The participants were questioned with these stated goals, there was a common understanding that Norway is far off from achieving this stated goals:

“We just have to admit that we are not where we are supposed to be at this time, the ambitions might have been a little off when setting the aims through the action plan”. Another statement suggest that the goals is more of a vision rather than a stated goal.

“The stated goals from the NFF’s action plan is from my point of view not a goal, but rather a vision we are aiming for day in and day out”.

Since the general understanding was that these goals is not met I further asked the participants what must be done for Norwegian football to achieve these stated goals, particularly of interest was what must be done to enable Norway to reach the objective of having 15-20 players out playing regularly within the 10 best ranked leagues in Europe.

“To increase our ability and close the gap to our European companions we must train more than them. I’m not a believer of today’s regime where players train one and a half hour and that’s it, double workouts a day should be a minimum when you’re a professional.”

“To enhance the performances of the Norwegian national team, we as a nation must produce better talents. We need to export more players out to the European clubs, and they have to play matches regularly”.

“Quality matchup on an international level week in and week out is essential to a player, not having Norwegian teams out in European competitions heavily weakens our chances, and this also becomes a domino effect. If the Norwegians is not good enough to qualify for the European tournament, why should the clubs from Europe’s top leagues look to Norway when scouting for player?”

These statements is somewhat the brutal reality the Norwegian clubs and players face. The lack of qualification to international tournaments for both the national team and the national clubs reduces the possibility for the players to display their abilities among the world best players.

Moreover discussions regarding the level of competence among the clubs leaders and coaches was argued for being a field Norway must strengthen enhance their performances.

“Norway as a football nation is relatively young. The late authorization of professional football have left us miles behind regarding competence on coaches and leaders”.

The mobility of Norwegian players

Lastly the participants was encourage to view the matter of mobility and its effect upon the national team. The participants taking part in the research displayed their thoughts on the matter. The general agreement was that the mobility of at least Norwegian footballers is essential to the performances of the Norwegian national team. Having players transferred out to larger European leagues is ideal, but the participants also emphasized other values, with particularly playing time as a key for developing. Too many of the Norwegian footballers fail to succeed and adapt to the continental level, and therefore is not experiencing the process of knowledge spillover over a greater period of time.

“Mobility of Norwegian footballers would strengthen the Norwegian national team chances to improve the past 15 years results”.

“The need for more Norwegian footballers playing at the best level of European level is urgent, but there is also lot of positives visible in the Norwegian league these days. Weaker budgets and less money to spend have led to a large wave of young Norwegian footballers receiving their chance in the top division of Norwegian football. Although it might be argued that the large amount of youths playing is a sign of weakness to the league in general”.

This particular citation is infact interesting. As the research of Darby & Solberg (2010) suggested a “deskilling” within African football and its donor nations, the weak financial condition amongst Norwegian clubs proposes a advantageous occurrence for the Norwegian youngsters. Earlier experience within their athetic career could improve the quality of future Norwegian internationals.

The participants also encourage the players to play for the less significant European leagues when leaving the domestic league. Mostly due to the increased possibility of receiving large amounts of playing time. Further the benefits with having a year to accumulate to a better European level cannot be underestimated.

“When a player move abroad he should try to transfer within less significant league than the top European leagues. So he can accumulate to a greater level of football before being transferred to one of Europe’s top leagues. The likes of the Dutch and Belgium league I find to be an ideal league developing as a footballer”.

Previous study suggest a large occurrence of Belgium and Dutch players migrating abroad to play amongst Europes elite (McGovern. 2002). The large portion of players migrating out from these leagues further emphasize the statement above.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore if the mobility of Norwegian footballers influence the success of the national team. This study emphasizes the theory from the study previously done by Elliot & Weedon and enables their “feet-exchange” theory. Further this

study also applies the knowledge spillover model presented through the work of Grossman and Helpman (1990).

Speaking to respected personnel within Norwegian football the understanding provided in this study is that the Norwegian national team is currently somewhat off recreating the results put up in the 90's. The current work being done in Norwegian football is improving, but there is still a lot of progress to be made. Participants in the study are specifically pointing towards the development of coaches and leaders within Norwegian football. More courses and better educational possibilities should be made available for the people involved within Norwegian football to attain a greater level of knowledge. With better qualified personnel leading the future generation of Norwegian football, improved results amongst the movement of players should also appear. Further an increased amount of Norwegian footballers transferring abroads should according to this research and the former study submitted by Elliot and Weedon (2010), rise the likelihood for Norwegian footballers to experience "feet-exchange", furthermore this should improve the possibility for the Norwegian footballers to reach their maximum potential as footballers.

From 2005 – 2015 the number of Norwegian footballers moving to play football abroad have increased. According to the theories submitted within the research this should improve the overall ability of a footballer. Although the number of footballers moving abroad is indeed rising this is not reflected within the results of the Norwegian national team. Figure 5 within the research refers to the destination of Norwegian footballers. The numbers suggest that a large amount of Norwegian footballers is transferring to leagues ranked similar to the Norwegian league or second tier divisions within other nations. For the Norwegian national team to be able to compete among the elite level of football, its players must also be exposed to the elite talent within their clubs. As this study shows, the majority of the Norwegian footballers are not experiencing this to this day. Equal to the importance of having players at the elite level of European football is also the situation for the players within their current clubs. This research participants emphasized on the true value of playing time for the footballers playing abroad, and pointed out that a lot of the Norwegians in the European leagues today does not appear to be receiving enough of it.

Moreover there was a general agreement among the contributors of this study that the mobility of footballers does in fact influence the result of the national team. This is not to

say that an even higher amount of Norwegian footballers transferring abroad immensely would greatens the chances for the national team to put up better results.

Limitations

Within this study the phenomenon being research is if the mobility of footballers influence the success of the national team.

When studying the success of a national team there are certainly more to it than just the amount of players playing outside their national division. Factors such as strength to the national team's national league, playing time for players within their clubs and number of people exercise the sport, is also factor that should be encountered for.

Although some limitations, the participants contributing to this study is very experienced within the Norwegian football. And there common knowledge of football is an asset I remark as a strenght to this research.

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