A European Perspective on the Current Issues of Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA)

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Overview

Research by the Author

• Support services for student-athletes
• Development of a support program for student-athletes
• Aim of studies: learn from ideas and mistakes that have been made internationally
• Detailed analysis of the American system
• Has visited several American athletic powerhouses

Outline of the Presentation

• Introduction and structure of study
• Situation analysis: support system for athletes in Germany
• Situation analysis: Intercollegiate athletics (USA)
• Triangulation: New findings regarding the support of student-athletes
• The special role of German student-athletes
• Outlook
Research project: Structure

GERMANY

Study Step II

German Sports

Theory

Study Step I

Inter-collegiate Athletics

Empiricism Qualitative Data

Empiricism Quanti. Data

USA

Study Step III

Study Step IV: Triangulation

Visting Scholar at the University of Oregon/ University of Texas at Austin

Time Sequence / temporal progress

GERMANY

Study Step II

Conclusion

Proposals for the future

Fusion

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Study step II: Situation Analysis (Germany): Support of Elite Athletes

- **academic**
- **employment**
  - Working as an apprentice
  - Police
  - Border control
  - Armed forces

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Study Step III: American College Athletics - an International Factor

- Recruiting international athletes is a growing trend
- 17,653 international student-athletes competed during the 2009-10 school year
- 500-700 German „A to C-Kader“ athletes are active members of an US-institution
- Highest number of German athletes outside of Germany
- US-Universities as only option to pursue an academic and athletic career at the same time for many German student-athletes
Study Step III: USA - Identification of Characteristics

US-specific problems

- Illegal recruiting
- "One and Done" phenomenon
- Amateurism
- Athletes’ rights
- Exploitation of ethnic minorities
- Role of "boosters" and alumni
- Tax exemptions
- High profile vs. low profile sports
- Salaries in athletic departments
- Structure of NCAA
- Power structure within university

Indicators for Germany

- Enrollment/ Matriculation
- Commercialism
- Scholarships (Length)
- Clustering
- Academic integrity
- Participation of faculty
- Competition between universities
- No one-dimensional focus
- Support programs / services
- Proximity of facilities

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Study Step IV: Qualitative Data (Interviews with US-experts)

- Were questioned about:
  - Problems of Intercollegiate Athletics
  - Perception of international student-athletes
  - Experiences with German student-athletes

- Findings suggest:
  - Wide spread problems especially in high profile sports occur:
    - Entrance procedures
    - Eligibility
    - Exploitation of student-athletes
    - Commercialism
    - Clustering (e.g. football, basketball)
    - Academic support, Life skills program (discrepancy = pros and cons)

- All experts valued European student-athletes regarding their:
  - Higher academic performance than American peers
  - Athletic performance, often leaders → Germans = special role
Quantitative Data – Development of Questionnaire

Contact:
- Individual university databases (use of search engines)
- Social network (facebook, Linkedin etc.)
- Coaches, athletes, personal contacts

Questionnaire:
- Mostly descriptive
- 550 times visited
- 163 completed questionnaires
- 47% female/ 53% male
- 18 different sports
Quantitative Data: Structure and Results

1. Design and process of conducting the survey

2. Range of results:
   - Biographic, sport- and study-specific profile
   - Duration of study
   - Time requirements/ burden (student-athletes)
   - Reasons for „exit“ USA
   - Scholarships at US-Universities
   - Support Services of American Universities
   - Academic performance of German student-athletes
   - Experiences at German und US-Universities
   - Evaluation of German and US Universities and sport-systems
Quantitative Data: German student-athletes in the US

- Would not have moved to the U.S. or continued to participate in elite sports without the opportunities in the US
- Want to pursue their university degree + compete at a high athletic level
- Athletic facilities and athletic opportunities in the US are superior
- Take advantage of academic support programs regularly
- Describe themselves as academically sounder than their teammates
- On average have better grades than the American student-athlete and the general student body
Quantitative Data:

Grade average:

- Grade average of German student-athletes (GPA): 3.53
- Grade average of students in the US (GPA): 3.11
- Grade average of all student-athletes in the USA (GPA): 2.56

Comparison - USA vs. GER (grades):

- 37 Athletes:
  - Preference USA=92%
    GER=3%
  - „Laufbahnberater“ vs. Academic advisor
    - OSP-Berater: D
    - US-academic advisor: A

- All questioned Athletes:
  - US-Uni.= 1,15 (A)
  - Ger. Uni.= 5,18 (F)
  - US-sports system: 1,66 (A)
  - Ger. sports system: 4,36 (D)
Study Step IV: Quantitative Data

Time restrictions per week

- Training (hrs per week): 20.4
- Studies (hrs per week): 22.2
- Side job (hrs per week; N:37): 12.32

Support services at US-Universities

- **US-Strengths according to the German athletes**
  - Academic support (only if independent from AD)
  - Physiotherapy / Medical support (superior to services in Germany)
  - Life skills courses (German student-athletes compiled a ranking in the study)
  - Psychological support (not common in Germany)
Conclusion

• Whether support services for student-athletes make sense is an ethical question!
• Once found important, there is an ethical obligation to assist student-athletes to be successful (in both countries)
• German student-athletes prove that academically well prepared and motivated student-athletes can flourish even in the highly problematic American system
• Lowering academic standards, only helps to marginalize the intellectual enterprise, has to be an elite and select program
Conclusions and Results

For both countries:
• University presidents don’t have the power to bring change
• Governmental or legislative influence is necessary
• Different conferences/universities need different models (revenue for only a few athletic departments at the moment)

Further research necessary:
• On efficiency of academic support + “life skills programs”
• On efficiency of state of the art academic centers
• Effects of close monitoring student-athletes
• Is actual academic success for student athletes in high profile sports possible
Thank you for your attention!

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Conclusion: Athletics in American Higher Education

- Rooted in the classical ideal of *Mens sana in corpore sano* - a sound mind in a sound body
- A complex/controversial aspect of higher education
- Established a multibillion dollar industry
- Student-athletes are modern stars
- Millions in revenue for only a few athletic departments
- Student-athletes often labeled as “dumb jocks”

**QUESTION:** What has been done to make actual academic success for student athletes possible?
In Germany

- possess two independent profiles (elite sports, university)
- Club system
- No financial support by the universities
- Support program „Partnerhochschule des Spitzensports“ has failed
- Cooperation with a lot of different organizations (olympic centers, associations, clubs, medical staff)

In the USA

- Intertwined within the educational system
- College teams
- Scholarships
- Entire support within the university and athletic department
- Support programs are installed