Attitudes to employment in sport

Introduction
One of the persistent features of the lives and careers of sports workers employed in professional contexts is its volatile context (Bottenburg, 2010; Rowe, 2011) whether the work is located within a (often privately owned) club setting or within a publicly funded entity such as Olympic or Paralympic teams. This chapter explores sports scientists and sports medics’ attitudes towards employment in these settings placing them within the wider contours of change within the sector and the increasing pressures on athletes and teams to attain and sustain competitive outcomes. In doing so, the main trajectory of thinking is challenged. Rather than conceiving the transformation of organisational strategies, practices and structures of professional sports clubs and their teams into more business-like, professional forms as inherently positive, a counter conceptualization will be put forward which argues that the increasing pressure on competitiveness is contorting the faces of these organisations and has specific emotional and attitudinal outcomes where sports scientists are concerned. Specifically, it will be argued that sports scientists repeated exposure to change is linked to a cycle whereby heightened staff turnover (particularly turnover generated by changes in management personnel) is accompanied by a weakened psychological contract, declining employment engagement, commitment and potentially stalled professional identity. More positively, the cycle also saw sports workers engaging with changes to practices brought about by changes to the management team, assimilating them and reflecting on what had been learned through navigating this cycle. Much of the empirical evidence will draw on developments and experiences within a UK setting but wherever possible, more international perspectives and accounts will be included.

The professional sports context and the nature of change

Conceptualising change
There is a general consensus that the wider context of professional sports and the organisation of professional sports clubs/teams have undergone a profound and radical change (Cunningham, 2006). For the purposes of this chapter, the wider sport context is understood as existing in a state of paradox where a dynamic balance is held between stable equilibrium on the one hand and explosive instability on the other. When organisations operate in such a setting, these contradictory forces (stability and instability) operate simultaneously, pulling the organisational systems in opposing directions (Stacey, 2000: 266). This means that predicting the immediate future – such as the outcomes of specific matches – can be impossible to determine with any accuracy, but it is possible to chart and identify the patterns of change emerging over time, which highlight a new and different order. Typically this is one that is marked by discontinuity, the extreme rapidity and scope of change, as well as the themes of security versus danger and trust versus risk (Giddens, 1990).

How we understand and conceptualise change and change management within professional sport is not an esoteric exercise as it has been argued that think kind of theorising within professional sport is generally lacking from the academic literatures as are a range of critiques concerning how we understand the environmental context. This is also accompanied by the lack of empirical evidence as to how change is carried out at the macro, meso and micro levels within the industry (Cruickshank and Collins, 2012).
**Key approaches to organisational change**

Two modes of change witnessed within professional sport literatures, and within organisational change more generally. One concerns planned, ‘top-down’ driven approaches (refs) dominated by a view that radical change is incapable of occurring in a gradual, or even piecemeal manner but must be rapid, often disruptive and even revolutionary in order for it to work effectively (Chia, 2014). The punctuated equilibrium model of Tushman and Romanelli (1985) and the concept of discontinuous change (Nadler, Shaw and Walton, 1995) argue that these radical, revolutionary forms of change generally occur over brief periods of time with the whole organisation usually being affected by the process. These radical forms of organisational change are often associated with highly visible, senior-manager led and sometimes large-scale, system-wide initiatives involving significant disruptions. These can involve structural reorganization, downsizing, outsourcing as well as the disruption of existing routines and/or an emphasis on the discontinuing of existing organisational practices – which could include sports science investment (see Gilmore and Sillince, 2014 for an example). Such forms of disruptive change can be witnessed in approaches to and expectations of managerial performance in certain professional sports. As argued by Bruinshoofd and ter Weel, 2003 and Cruickshank and Collins (2012), whilst Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) may be offered notable time to resurrect the fortunes of an underperforming company, a ‘hiring and firing’ policy is often adopted when the manager of the on-field performance team does not provide expected results. But as argued by Smith (2004) some sophisticated change and innovation does occur in sports organisations due to the planned instigation of senior managers so they are not without agency and do plan for the future. However Smith (2004) in his small-scale study found that organisational change in his sample of National Sports Organisations was not planned. Indeed, changes to existing operations were argued by his respondents to have occurred as a result of a conflation of inadvertent, unintended circumstances and not through design or strategic intent.

In contradistinction, emergent ‘bottom up’ approaches to organisational change view it as the result of cumulative and often piecemeal, adaptive actions taken by organisational members in learning to cope and adapt to the exigencies of organisational situations. Pettigrew’s (1987) framework of continuity and change as a co-exiting mode of action has some resonance with the maintenance of routines and practices over time occurring alongside the kinds of open-ended change witnessed in many professional sports. Chia (2014) advocates a quiet approach to change: arguing for it as ubiquitous and ‘natural’ within human life and societies. However, the evidence within the sports literatures for such approaches to change management are patchy and there are few of the hallmarks of emergent attitudes to change such as the development of staff over time and the concomitant building of internal, potentially dynamic capabilities. Although these can be seen in Gilmore and Gilson’s (2007) case study of Bolton Wanderers Football Club and the ways by which the organisation (club and playing department) were able to leverage and sustain performance on significantly lower expenditure than most of their Premier League counterparts.

**The professional sport context**

For some commentators, the preference for radical forms of change have been seen as evidence of the globalisation and free market of sports such as football, cricket, rugby
and Formula 1 racing. This has been intertwined with the commercialisation of the sports industry and the increasing dependence of professional sport on TV rights deals, the advent of new owners for elite clubs as well as new modes of club/team ownership, as well as changes to the contractual terms of the employment relationship for many athletes which generally favour freedom of movement and contract (Newman, 2014). The globalization of the media and the advent of new media outlets has provided increased commercial impact for certain sports events such as the Olympic Games, the World Cup Finals as well as prestigious sports leagues. For example, within the football domain, the Champions League has seen UEFA receive over €500 million in broadcasting and sponsorship incomes in the recent round of TV rights deals (Calvin, 2013). This has been enhanced by their contract with BT Sport who will pay £897 million for a three-year deal to broadcast live Champions League and Europa League matches. The widening participation of clubs in Europe (either via the Champions or Europa Leagues) as well as the fiscal necessity for Premier League clubs to remain in this league in order to secure/maintain income and prestige, has resulted in some clubs spending increasing amounts of money on transfer fees and wages for players (Cox, Gilmore and Graham, 2015). This has led to some commentators arguing that there is a sense of clubs ‘spiraling out of control’ as new owners seek to outbid other high spending clubs (Geey, 2011). The debt load now carried by some Premier League clubs is substantial (Deloitte, 2015) with some commentators arguing that the threat of bankruptcy is underplayed by both clubs and governing bodies alike (Hardin, 2004). Several studies highlight the size of the financial instability currently characterizing clubs and leagues (e.g. UEFA, 2009/10) and Cuttler (as cited in Cox, Gilmore and Graham, 2015: 3) succinctly describes the strains experienced by clubs faced with contemporary performance challenges as a form of ‘financial Russian roulette’ based on the imperative for club playing success in order to attain and further the club’s status within the league system – especially that of the EPL.

These pressures have resulted in high degrees of internal organisational change at club level. Much of this change has and continues to be instigated by the sacking of the first team manager should results be less than expected. As noted by Day et al (2012) the high rate of managerial turnover is one of the most enduring features of professional football with the League Managers Association estimating his average tenure as being 1.23 years with 64 manager movements and 47 dismissals (LMA, 2015). Mielke (2007) argues that this phenomenon is not solely a European matter and restricted to professional football, highlighting that top tier coaches across a range of sports in the USA are also regularly replaced for failing to meet team owners’ expectations. Whilst not witnessing the same volatility and chronic insecurity, evidence suggests that other sports within the UK such as cricket are also experiencing heightened managerial departures as the sport adapts and adjusts to changes brought about in its operating environment via the advent of initiatives such as the Indian Premier League in 2008. But changes in manager/first team coach or equivalent are often accompanied by the arrival of additional staff such as Assistant Manager, Coaches and other workers who the new manager brings in. These people have usually worked with the manager before and are trusted advisors in an environment more noted for the absence of trust. As a result, it is also common to see substantial changes to backroom and SM&SS staff following managerial changes in professional sport as new philosophies, methodologies, and attendant practices are ushered in.
Even those SM&SS working within a publicly funded context experience increasing volatility to their employment status. The provision of moneys to UK National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBS) are awarded competitively on a payment-by-results basis demonstrating ‘value for money’ and the delivery of specified sporting outcomes (DCMS, 2012, p.9) such as being an Olympic or Paralympic sport or having a weekly participation rate above 75,000 people in England, as recorded within the Active People Survey. This means that failure to meet targets can result in a drop in income – as occurred with reference to basketball, weightlifting and British Swimming with reference to the synchronised swimming and water polo teams (BBC, 2014). For those sports scientists working with Olympic and Paralympic teams (via the aegis of the English Institute of Sport, the UK Sport’s, science medicine and technology arm) such cuts in funding can mean that they face redeployment to other sports or even redundancy. In this way, it is possible to argue that the enhanced accountabilities being seen across professional sports impact directly on sports scientists and sports medics as well as those who manage them. This has resulted in an increasing precariousness employment context and the decline of any ‘standard’ or more regular or accepted forms of employment. This leaves certain categories of sports workers such as SM&SS increasingly susceptible to market imperatives and performance accountabilities as well as the need to develop flexible subjectivities with an increasing requirement to remake themselves in ways that willingly embrace the demands of the marketplace – with a concomitant impact on attitudes towards work and work practices – that are aligned with the needs of the increasingly neo-liberal professional sports economy (Vallas, 1999; Cummins and Vallas, 2015).

**The consequences of change for sports scientists**

Although the important contribution made by sports scientists to the development of professional sport is slowly being acknowledged, little is known about these sports professionals (Dawson et al, 2013). Issues to do with nepotistic recruitment practices, lack of credentialism, or a defined career pathway for sports scientists upon leaving university are of no recent date and still plague the industry (Waddington et al., 2001; Waddington, 2002). Where we have some empirical research, this suggests that sports science workers are often required to work outside of standard office hours with this additional service normally being unpaid. Much of the work often requires people management skills, which are often not included within the training undertaken at either undergraduate or postgraduate levels. They are also required to behave ethically but there was a distinct lack of inclusion of ethics within their professional formation. The Exercise and Sports Science Australia survey also found that one third of the workforce included within the research were actively seeking other employment with the most popular reasons for this being workload and perceptions of insufficient support – factors that are often linked to employee burnout (Dawson et al., 2013).

**Emotional responses to change**

At the organisational level, work by Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell (2015) with reference to two Premier League football clubs and a County Championship cricket club found that rounds of managerial change resulted in sports scientists navigating a cycle. This comprised four stages: anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval and realisation, integration and experimentation and normalisation and learning. Characteristic responses at each stage began with uncertainty – often provoked by manager departure/sacking and the arrival of a new one. Emotional responses here
sometimes included disappointment – either at the loss of a manager or managerial team where working arrangements had been productive or at the prospect of having to acclimatize to a new senior management team. Alongside these responses, participants articulated a heightened climate of sensitivity, rumour, speculation and gossip. Such environments were exacerbated when communication from the club’s strategic apex was poor and the workers concerned accessed their information from the sports media or the Internet – as witnessed from one respondent (Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell, 2015: 6):

‘There had been rumors that [last manager] was on his way and a camera crew had been outside the gate all week. Things were quiet from the management, but everyone in the SM&SS department was talking and considering the consequences of a change of manager. There was a lot of uncertainty about how SM&SS practices would be impacted and who’d leave. Then, the manager leaving was confirmed on Sky Sports News’.

As the managerial team ‘bedded into’ their new context, respondents made comparisons with past practices and relationship as how working life compared to the past. Should the comparisons be negative, this might lead to resistance to new practices, opportunism and protective behaviours with a focus on protecting the self or exploiting the situation to secure personal advantage. The next two stages in the cycle see a shift in focus to assimilating previous and new practices. This might lead to challenging the initial attitudinal, emotional and behavioural responses to change that might have resisted it. As a result, new norms can be developed and embedded (Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell, 2015: 9).

‘After the early resistance, turnover of staff and people putting their head in the sand, we have reached a point where we are building. Some of the new ways have become the norm, people feel less threatened and are therefore being more innovative and vocal about best practice with coaches. I think some people have had their eyes opened’.

Finally, there is a focus on reflection and learning. This is often marked by an acknowledgement of change as a common facet of elite performance environments and the need for the sports scientists to translate knowledge, skills and abilities to relevant others – thus seeing a shift from an earlier focus on the self to a broader regard for the collective. Their findings support and extend non-sport change research (e.g. Jaffe et al., 1994) in highlighting the importance of cognition and affect during the change process. It also coheres with change models borrowing from the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) whose work on navigating bereavement and loss has been extensively adapted to include responses to aspects of organisational change such as redundancy.

More significantly for SM&SS, the findings highlight the potentially negative impact of managerially-oriented organisational change on sports science practices and roles as previously embedded, even institutionalized routines and ways of working are often ‘re-set’ with the arrival of a new manager. Given that is not uncommon for sports scientists in some settings to have experienced five changes in manager in as many years, then there are questions as to how this cycle is persistently navigated over an extended time-frame. The data in this study indicate that although repeated
exposure to cycles of change may lead to an emotionally resilient SM&SS department, there was evidence of a more brittle and less trusting psychological contract between the sports scientists and their employer.

The psychological contract
Following Rousseau (1995), the psychological contract is defined as an individual’s beliefs concerning the mutual obligations that exist between the employee and the employer. These obligations arise out of the belief that a promise has been made either explicitly or implicitly and the fulfillment of obligations by one party is contingent upon the fulfillment of them by the other. In this way, the psychological contract comprises an individual’s perception of the mutual obligations that exist in the exchange with the employer (often as represented by the line manager) and these are sustained through the norm of reciprocity. Should SM&SS experience persistent change over time allied to the re-setting of practices and routines, it is likely that individuals will perceive this as a breach of the contract. Should this occur, responses are likely to be negative and result in reduced loyalty, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Given the long hours working culture of many high performance sports teams, a decline in OCBs could have a negative impact on the functioning of the specific sports science department. This could be particularly damaging in clubs lacking a density of staff in relevant sports science disciplines, as there will be fewer opportunities for ensuring effective functioning. Finally, whilst the impact of the breach might be experienced by isolated individuals - as opposed to the whole workforce - should morale be more generally affected, the performance of the unit may decline with concomitant impacts on performance. It is also pertinent to note that mismatches between the manager and employee may also cause a cleavage in the psychological contract. Given the nature of managerial turnover, it is highly likely that this in itself will be a major cause of a break in the contract.

Exit, loyalty, voice and cynicism
Whilst more experienced member of sports science staff were prepared to voice their opinions and to mobilise their networks to facilitate exit, less experienced workers deployed silence as an effective coping mechanism. Given that these forms of work are perceived as being ‘hot jobs in a cool industry’ (Neff et al., 2005), deploying silence when a neophyte is arguably a sensible strategy for maintaining employment – as witnessed below (Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell, 2015: 9).

Typically, after that initial uncertainty it has been the more experienced [SM&SS] people who have been more vocal in terms of contributing to the new changes. Most of us who are going through this for the first time have stayed silent, and to be honest, I think that has been my best move during the whole process – just staying quiet. I can’t say it’s been easy, but at least I haven’t lost my job by voicing my opinions too loudly.

However, this can exert an emotional cost. Hirschman’s (1970) seminal exit, loyalty, voice model was developed to explain employees responses to ‘lapses from efficient, rational, law-abiding, virtuous, or otherwise functional organizational behavior’ (1970: 1). His work captures and structures the ways by which employees might respond to sources of dissatisfaction and adverse workplace conditions.

Within Hirschman’s model, exit is generally viewed as a means of signaling
discontent with the firm’s products or behaviour. Where the latter is concerned, Rusbult et al (1988) conceived the exit option not only as actually quitting the job or voluntarily leaving the organisation, but also as searching for a new job or thinking about leaving. Exit, therefore is as much about the \textit{propensity} to leave as it is about actually departing. ‘Whereas actually leaving the organization may not always be a viable option, due to real or perceived barriers to exit, leaving the organization in a psychological sense is something over which the employee has more control’ (Naus et al., 2007: 688).

Voice was defined by Hirschman as ‘any attempt at all to change an objectionable state of affairs, not only by petitioning to management or higher authorities, but also through protests including the mobilization of the public opinion’ (1970: 30). When the model is employed to describe the employment relationship, voice necessarily takes on a different meaning, defined by Rusbult et al. (1988) as ‘actively and constructively trying to improve conditions’. This was witnessed within Gilmore and Sillince’s (2014) study where a senior member of performance staff attempted to negotiate between the manager and his increasingly alienated SM&SS workforce to no effect – indeed his ‘voice’ was perceived as the offering of opinions that were counter to those of the manager and therefore as a form of opposition. It was not long before the senior staffer transitioned from ‘voice’ to ‘exit’.

Finally, loyalty refers to a special attachment to the organisation with the loyalist being seen as someone of cares, who leaves no stone unturned before taking the decision to withdraw or exit. It has also been seen as a form of optimistically waiting for conditions to improve with this often being accompanied by offering support to the organisation. For Hirschman, the importance of loyalty provides a psychological barrier to exit and in so doing strengthens the propensity to voice.

More recently, Naus et al (2007) have proposed that the model be extended to include Organisational Cynicism, a response defined as ‘a negative attitude comprising three dimensions’. First, a belief that the company lacks integrity, second, a negative affect toward the organisation and finally, tendencies towards disparaging and critical behaviour toward the organisation that is consistent with these beliefs. Cynicism also serves as a form of self-defence, which allows the individual to cope with unpleasant thoughts and feelings of disappointment about the actions taken by the firm and its management. It is an important response and one that may have profound implications for both the individual and the organisation and can result in fractures to the psychological contract. However, although the literature sees cynicism as being associated with apathy, resignation, distrust and so on as well as poor performance, absenteeism, job-turnover and burnout (Abraham, 2000) cynics can also act as the conscience for the organisation. This means that it is neither an unalloyed good nor evil for the firm. Moreover, cynics can care deeply about their organisation and make careful and systematic recommendations of organisational problems (Bommer et al., 2005). Applied to a sport context that reifies teamwork, cynicism might be difficult to incorporate within an ethos that typically stresses positivity and unity but understanding the benefits cynicism might have to offer both the cynic and the team entity could be productive.

\textit{Defenses against anxiety}
Finally, it has been argued that we construct organisational norms, routines, structures and such as a defense against anxiety – an emotion that is often unconsciously as well as consciously experienced (Obholzer and Roberts, 1994). Should those structures be dismantled – as they often are during a time of change – then this can cause these feelings to surface. We therefore unwittingly unleash the very emotions we have worked hard to contain. Containing anxiety will often require the existence of managers, team leaders and members who can hold such feelings. Gilmore and Sillince’s (2014) study of the deinstitution of sports science at a Premier League club shows how this capability, developed over several years, was effectively disbanded within a short period of time. This was not solely due to staff departures to join the previous manager at a new club, but to the failure of the senior team to contain their own anxieties at a time of substantial change. An organisational climate marked by emotional warmth and a community of practice built up over time was replaced by a toxic one of paranoia, an ‘us and them’ attitude between the managerial team and the ‘old’ sports scientists and a decline in the innovative use of sports science as a strategic performance lever. Whilst it is impossible to remove unconscious anxieties when anxieties become heightened, they are evacuated. What is required is not just tutor tolerance of anxieties and their evacuation but an ability to enable people to sort out the nature of the experience, to digest it mentally and give it meaning, to be a thinker in an emotional sense. If this occurs, we become able to internalize not only a ‘container’ of feelings but also a mind that can hold thoughts (Gilmore and Anderson, 2011).

Organisational responses

Responses to the rapidity of change are difficult to chart with any degree of certainty due to the lack of research across professional sports – mainly caused by problems academic researchers face with regards to access. This means that well-informed assessments are hard to make and even claims made here are based on sketchy evidence. Structurally, one response has been to install a ‘Sporting Director’ post at a very senior level within the playing hierarchy, responsible to either the CEO or Board of Directors who is in charge of the sports science department and staff. Such posts are well established in, for example, Italian and Spanish football clubs and although some, mostly Premier League clubs, have experimented with this role and continue to do so as a means of instigating stability and continuity of practices, it is uncertain as to how well they ‘gell’ with the culture of English football. In some high-profile instances, these posts have been as volatile as those of the manager with no real security of tenure. For example, former Director of Football, Damien Comolli, has not been employed in such a post since his sacking by Liverpool and a turbulent relationship with manager, Martin Jol at Tottenham Hotspur.

Other innovations in terms of attempting to ensure more beneficial approaches towards organisational change include a focus on the culture of the performance department and an exploration and identification of high performance cultures elsewhere in sport or business. (e.g. Cruickshank and Collins, 2012; Dawson and Dobson, 2002). For example, sport psychology research has highlighted the utility of 360-degree feedback (Cope et al., 2007) and organizational citizenship behaviour (Aoyagi et al., 2008) for creating optimal team environments. There has also been a borrowing from military environments in terms of the construct of mental toughness/resilience. This suggests that some borrowing from business and other organisational environments has been sought. However, the extent to which it has
been used effectively and productively for all parties needs further inspection.

Other developments have seen some clubs offer managers extended employment contract. However, the extent to which they have been successful in halting managerial turnover where they have been adopted seems limited given the persistence of managerial departures – but again, this is difficult to gauge accurately given the private nature of contractual terms. Additionally, there certainly has been a shift in terms of the numbers of staff managers are now permitted to bring with them when they join a new club. The current expectation is now for the manager to bring perhaps an assistant manager, a coach and possibly a member of staff on the fitness front. Whilst the advent and integration of these highly powerful individuals within the very closely knotted confines of a playing department still has ramifications, this trend seems set to continue.

**Agendas for practice and research**

Having outlined the evidence – such as it is – with reference to sports workers attitudes toward work, an agenda for practice and research will now conclude this chapter. As noted by Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell (2015), Chief Executive Officers and performance directors need to be aware that the changes they instigate and implement – often via the aegis of managerial change – have a direct impact on the productivity, creativity, engagement and turnover in SM&SS staff (ref). One key recommendation for practice is for the education of those at the strategic pediment as to the consequences of repeated cycles of change. This should also be accompanied by an agenda for research across the ‘public’ and ‘private’ sports sectors as the responses to change outlined in elite sports clubs are potentially experienced by those working in Olympic and Paralympic sports where four year funding cycles determine so much in the employment contracts of sports workers. Such research needs to establish whether a longer-term strategy is required for SM&SS; one that emphasises the stability and endurance of philosophies and practices despite managerial change. Such research should also investigate case studies of clubs who have adopted different structures and reporting arrangements. To what extent have Sporting Directors engendered stability and endurance of sports science and medical practice and staff? To what extent do they foster cultures and climates of high performance practices over time as compared to more volatile entities? Should those postholders sit on the Board of Directors? Would it be preferable for SM&SS to report to a Sporting Director with organisational power than a Head of Sports Science and Medicine who is frequently located below the team manager and thus without any institutional clout? Finally, is there a need for greater institutionalisation and even bureaucracy to sediment sports science work and if so, what might be the implications for the contractual bases for sports scientists? Would an expectation of greater stability be an outcome?

Such structural changes have implications for the Human Resource Management function and their expertise. Professional organisations such as the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development have argued for the function to take issues like stresses to the psychological contract seriously and through their professional formation, HR specialists should be aware of the implications of open-ended change on a range of workplaces and workers. Additionally, as experts in areas such as recruitment, selection and staff development, the function should have much to offer strategic level staff in terms of securing better ‘fit’ between club and managerial staff
at the point of recruitment and to call an end to nepotistic hiring practices where managers seek to import their preferred staff. Arguably a greater degree of professionalization of HR practices would result in a greater understanding of the range of SM&SS roles as well as the skills, knowledge and education required for them to be carried out at the optimal level. Such a shift would require taking HRM seriously within the playing and strategic levels of the organisation more generally; ensuring that the function was involved in all hires within the performance department. It would also require the HRM staff to be highly knowledgeable as to the nature of the jobs they were supporting. Given the trend for the HRM function to adopt a more ‘strategic’ role within organisations (Boxall and Purcell, 2011), it is likely that resistance might be met as micro-level engagement in the details of key worker roles, careers etc. could be perceived as a return to a former era of personnel management and as such it would denote a retrograde development and status for the function. It is also likely that ‘outsider’ influence on key recruitment decisions within the playing side would be resisted. In sum, do we need more highly experienced SM&SS in leadership positions not just subordinate ones?

Allied to this argument for enhanced professionalisation, there is an urgent need for a review of the professional formation of sports scientists so that they are better prepared for the volatility of the professional sports environment and the emotional labour it entails (Wagstaff, Gilmore and Thelwell, 2015). To this end it is pertinent to ask whether the working lives of sports workers would or could be improved by more powerful professional bodies who are able to set out requirements for accredited practitioners and to require sports organisations to adhere to them at the point of recruitment and to devote relevant time/funds for continuous professional development? Research carried out in Australia to better understand the Australian high performance and sports science workforce found that the sports scientists surveyed, whilst inexperienced, were generally highly qualified but did not necessarily belong to relevant professional bodies associated with their particular specialism. As the authors note, this provides a problem for the industry as these concerns about either direct or indirect quality assurance or forms of professional accreditation still remain (Dawson et al., 2013). Finally, it would also require a fundamental shift in culture for sports which remain dominated by clashes in capital which respond negatively to engagement with education and instead reward modes of embodied capital, largely achieved through a playing career (Gillivray et al., 2005, 2006). Because to take a professionalization strategy seriously requires taking education and training seriously across all levels of professional sport and ultimately refusing access to ineligibles: i.e. those who have not gained forms of accredited competence. Somewhat against the experiences of professions in contemporary workplaces, this would be an argument for ‘social closure’ (Larson, 1977) with the HRM function, sporting directors and heads of sports science and medicine ensuring this occurs.

To conclude this chapter, there is a pressing need for research to fully ascertain employee attitudes towards work and the organisations that employ them. Work is widely recognised as a core activity in contemporary social life. It is increasingly central not only to our economic needs but also to our identities, emotional well-being, and to our mental health. Although SM&SS jobs are often perceived as being ‘cool jobs in hot industries’ (Neff et al., 2006), research suggests that this is not
necessarily the case and that they are prone to all of the ills that currently plague
many other occupations. Yet they are also heralded as being exemplars of a form of
work akin to media and dot com industries. As Neff et al note while workers to those
types of jobs are drawn to them because of the excitement attached to them (as well
as the autonomy and creativity), this work has a personal cost and this involves the
normalisation of risks associated with this work. This has a personal cost over time
and because for many sports, sports science and sports medicine are relatively new
careers, it is imperative that a research agenda is constructed that explores these issues
in depth across a range of sports and sports science functions.

References


