The Effects of Elite Player Exodus on Sports Systems in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the Ghana Premier League

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The Effects of Elite Player Exodus on Sports Systems in Developing Countries:

A Case Study of the Ghana Premier League

By

Ian Osei Owusu

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Faculty of Human Kinetics

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2012

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AUTHOR’S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and no part of this research has been published or submitted anywhere else for publication.

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ABSTRACT

Migration of sport talents from developing countries has been on the increase in recent times (Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Poli, 2006a; 2006b; Thibault, 2009). Although some attention has been given to this phenomenon and the effects it has on the sending and receiving countries, not a large body of literature exists on the adverse effects of player exodus on sports systems in developing countries. With the exception of works particularly done by Darby (2000a; 2007b; 2009; Darby & Solberg, 2010) in relation to developing countries, there is no literature from major stakeholders’ perspectives on the effects of the phenomenon on national leagues. The purpose of this study is to examine the stakeholders’ perspectives of player migration on the sports system in the Ghana Premier League (GPL) and to identify possible solutions which will help reduce the migration of sport talents and its adverse effects on the local sports system. The study involved semi-structured interviews with thirteen stakeholders including club managers, league administrators, fan representatives, sponsors and media persons related to the GPL. The outcome of the study indicates that stakeholders generally perceive a negative effect of migration on the league. In line with the neoclassical economics theory (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor, 1993; Todaro, 1980), financial reasons were identified as the primary factor for player migration. However, other factors such as lack of professionalism of clubs, insufficient sponsorship for the league, and inadequate infrastructures were identified as driving forces behind player migration, which is in line with the human capital and dependency theories (Gunder, 1974; Massey et al., 1993). Suggestions such as increased remuneration, increased media focus, increased professionalism by the GPL and league clubs, as well as restructuring of the local sports systems were identified as possible initiatives to minimize migration and its adverse effects on the GPL.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who have believed and genuinely supported me in this journey, to my dad and especially to Pauline my mum, Giovani my son and Gifty my wife. Thank you for being there and I thank God for the privilege of such lives.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Taks my academic advisor, for her guidance and feedback through the period of this program. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Templer and especially Dr. Paraschak for her continuous positive energy, understanding and homely support. And to all faculty members like Dr. Martyn, Dr. Kevin Milne and Dr. Jess Dixon who always had their doors opened for me, I say “Meda mo ase” (Thank you).

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To my fellow graduate students and close friends like Bernie, Robbie, Mikey K, April, Alyssa, Valerie, Arlo and Reinaldo and to my league club Windsor Croatia and everyone who has been there for me in diverse ways, your encouragement, support and friendship was really handy and a blessing throughout my period in this university and I am persuaded it always will going forward.

To the Ghana Football Association and to my participants I say a very big thank you for your contribution; this thesis would not be possible without your assistance.

I would also want to specially acknowledge the late Alhaji Sylvester Tetteh, founder and President of Liberty Professionals Football Club, who moved on to a better life a week after granting me an interview for this study. May his blessed soul rest in perfect peace with Allah. Above all, I am grateful to my God for keeping that which I have committed unto Him against each day.
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INTRODUCTION

Although most African nations have no standings in the economic, political and industrial rankings of nations in the world, in the global world of soccer Africa has made its presence felt in the last two decades (Darby, Akindes, & Kirwin, 2007). At various levels of world championships and Olympic Games most African nations have excelled. The successes and performance of the national teams of countries such as Nigeria and Ghana at junior soccer tournaments like the World under 17 and under 20 championships (Ghana, 2010) are all factors that put Africa in the limelight globally when it comes to sports and soccer in particular. This profiling of Africa in the soccer world has, however, increased the interest of European soccer clubs in acquiring the services of young elite athletes from Africa at the expense of the clubs and countries where the players have developed (Darby et al., 2007). Several empirical studies have been done on this phenomenon of migration of sports labor and the processes and factors that influence it, and the effects it has on the sending countries (e.g., Darby & Solberg, 2010; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Hallinan & Jackson, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Pearton, 2000). A good portion of these studies have concentrated on the complex interdependent processes and factors of sports labor migration, however, the effects it has on the migrant countries has not received the same level of attention.

Labor migration is not a new phenomenon and involves the movement of the workforce from one place to another within different geographical locations at different points in time. Workers who migrate to ply their trades do this for many reasons which are not limited to just economic, cultural or geographic factors (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). Some labor migrants migrate by their own accord whereas other migrants do so without intention. An example of an unintended migration is the transfer of individuals from one branch of an organization to another.
within the same organization, but in another city, country or continent. As indicated by Bale and Maguire (1994), the industrialized nature of societies is characterized by a mobile workforce. Most organizations have national, international and global networks or extensions that make the movement of labor and as such migration part of the processes undertaken by the workforce.

Even though many do not see sports people as workers, they are just like workers in other sectors who ply their trade in various locations nationally, internationally or between continents (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Thus the geographical patterns of migration mentioned above, reveal the levels at which labor migration can occur. Sports labor migration is a global phenomenon that transcends cultural, ethnic, economic and geographical boundaries (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). Therefore, no single reason can be attributed to what influences players to migrate from one place to another. This indicates the complex nature of sports labor migration. It is very difficult to give a single or specific reason or pattern that captures the underlying factors and processes inherent in the migration of sports labor.

In order to help researchers identify patterns of athletic labor migration, Maguire (1996) developed a typology of sports labor migration, which in itself does not explain in totality why elite athletes migrate. However, it gives a basis for understanding some complexities in the motivations for the migration process. The categories of migrants are identified as pioneers, settlers, mercenaries, nomadic cosmopolitans and returnees. Pioneers are those migrants who exude the zeal in extolling their respective sports and act in a way that appears to want to convert individuals in their new homes to their body habits and sports cultures. Examples of such migrants are the Sokol movements of the 19th century (Maguire, 1999). Settlers are those migrants who bring their sports with them and settle in the places or societies where they work. Examples of settlers may include players that migrate and naturalize for the countries where they
ply their trade. Mercenaries refer to those migrants who are motivated by short-term gains and have little or no attachments to the places where they ply their trade. This label may be applicable to rugby and football players who are hired to feature in major tours of particular sports. On the other hand, Nomadic cosmopolitans are those who use their sports to journey and embark on the experience of being the other in a cosmopolitan culture. They may sometime seek adventures from their places of competition. Eric Cantona, the ex-French international soccer player’s experience in English soccer (Cantona connection, 2001), as well as surfers and extreme sports participants may serve as examples of these migrant types (Maguire & Stead, 1996).

Finally, returnees are identified as those athletes who have a strong attachment to their home countries and therefore return sometimes to their home countries to continue their trade. Therefore, all other types of migrants identified might at some point in time play the role of returnees. It is however important to note that none of these categories of migrants can be ideal in itself (Maguire, 2004). This is because it is possible to have migrants who have the desire to make as much money as they can, and also want to travel as much they can. In such instances, such migrants will fit into the typology of mercenaries and nomadic cosmopolitans at the same time. Likewise, others sports labor migrants might want to experience sports in another culture and at the same time want to bring their sports to their migrant destinations. This therefore makes them both nomadic cosmopolitans and pioneers at the same time, when taking Maguire’s (1996) typologies into account. Magee and Sugden (2002) introduced the following categories of sports labor migrants: the ambitionist, the exile and the expelled. Ambitionists are seen as those sports labor migrants who migrate due to the desire or ambition to play at the highest level as professionals and also in a country for which they have a strong desire to play. The exile is identified as the player who migrates due to sports or political related issues in his/her native
country. These migrants use sports as a means to demonstrate and propagate political causes pertaining to their countries of origination. The ex-Liberian international and 1995 Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) world player of the year, George Oppong Weah is cited as an example of an exile who used his iconic status as a means to draw international attention to the war situation in his native Liberia (Magee & Sugden, 2002). Eric Cantona’s problems with the French football authorities and his subsequent move to England is an example of the category of expelled, which refers to players who are forced to migrate.

These categories of migrants reveal the complex dimensions inherent in the migration process and the different motivations of sports migrants. The recognition that there is no ideal typology but rather an overlap within larger sociological and global issues is essential to the study of migration processes (Maguire, 2004). In view of these complex dimensions mentioned in the categories above and given the importance of the different motivations of sports labor migrants, there is a need for a holistic approach which involves broader and wider issues that motivate the decision of players to migrate.

As noted above, processes, factors and motivations of elite player migration cannot be completely captured by typologies, categories, just economic factors or solely by broader social issues (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire 1996; 2004; Maguire & Stead, 1996). Even though it can be argued that each of these factors and processes have a part to play in the decision by elite athletes to migrate, there is no one reason that can be singled out as the sole factor leading to migration by these elite athletes from their local leagues to wealthier leagues in other countries.
Considering the importance of migration in sports, a significant amount of research has investigated the phenomenon with a focus on the processes inherent in the migration of elite sports labor, but limited attention has been given so far to the impact of the phenomenon on the sports systems in the host country.

**Statement of the Problem**

When players leave their home countries, they leave with the skill that was at the disposal of the domestic league and local fans. As well, the remaining and upcoming players are compelled to follow the exploits of these players in their destination countries. Similarly, players who make the decision to migrate to wealthier leagues, mostly but not only limited to Europe, depart due to a number of reasons. Factors such as media focus on the performance of players abroad also have the potential of diverting the interest of the fans as well as the remaining local stars from the local scene. Such unintended and intended processes as indicated by Elliot and Maguire (2008) can have an unintended adverse effect over time and result in the deskilling of the donor country. Therefore, this study analyses the unintended effects of the exodus of soccer players on the local leagues of developing countries. Furthermore, the study will also look at possible initiatives that can be undertaken to control the migration of players. Ghana and the Ghanaian Premier League will provide the context for the study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to identify the effects of player migration on the Ghana Premier League. Studies have already been done on the migration of African players to Europe and how this affects the sending nations as well as benefits the receiving nations and vice versa. Most of these studies, in this regard, have generally focused on Africa as a continent (e.g.,
Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007; Darby, 2007a, 2007b; Poli, 2006a, 2006b; Scherrens, 2007), and in some occasions on particular sending countries (Darby & Solberg, 2010; Domingos, 2007; Johnson, Holmes & Vassili, 2009). These previous studies identify general processes and factors that contribute to understanding sports labor migration and its effects in the world of sports. However, few studies analyzed the effects of player migration on the Ghanaian league and what can be done to control the adverse effects of migration on the league.

Drawing on the vast literature available on migration of sports talents (e.g., Bruce & Wheaton, 2009; Darby & Solberg, 2010; Kapur & McHale, 2005; Maguire, 1999; Omolo, 2010; Thibault, 2009), this study specifically investigates and analyzes the effects of player migration from Ghana to Europe on the domestic Premier league. The associated problems and the resultant effects of this phenomenon on the domestic league are identified through the perceptions of major stakeholders in the Ghanaian Premier league. More importantly, this study will investigate what can be done from a stakeholder’s perspective, to improve the fortunes of the domestic league, in the face of the threat of the exodus of these local talents.

**Significance of the Study**

The study contributes theoretically to the already existing data on sports labor migration by enhancing the understanding of the complex and varying interdependent factors that motivate the decision to migrate (e.g., Bruce & Wheaton, 2009; Darby & Solberg, 2010; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Hallinan & Jackson, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Pearton, 2000) by players from leagues in developing countries. Factors that motivate the decision to migrate by elite athletes from developing countries such as Ghana are identified from the perspective of managers and other major stakeholders. Negative effects that the phenomenon of sports labor
migration has on the local sports systems of developing countries are revealed (e.g., Darby, 2007a, 2007b; Darby, Arkindes & Kirwin, 2007; Maguire, 1999; Omolo, 2010). Recommendations from this study may help stakeholders and policy makers from developing countries like Ghana to develop strategies and initiatives and to institute constructive policies in order to reduce the adverse effects of the exodus of players to wealthier leagues on the local league. The social and economic effects that player exodus has on local sports systems in developing countries are discussed and brought to the fore for further research.

First, the concept of migration and some theories of migration with emphasis on the neoclassical economic theories (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor, 1993; Todaro, 1980) and dependency theory (Gunder, 1974) are explained. The literature review further elaborates on sport labor migration, factors of migration and migration literature on some countries. Next, the effects of migration of players from developing countries and the Ghana Premier league are examined.

**Operational Definitions**

There is no standard definition and explicit typology either in theoretical analyses or operational models when it comes to the literature for the migration phenomena (Zhang, Kelly, Locke, Winkels & Adger, 2006). This is to say that no single definition, theory or model completely encompasses the complexities present in the phenomena of migration. This study is limited to one of the many definitions of the migration phenomenon. In simple terms, the word migration can be defined as the movement of people from one place to another (“A definition of migration,” n.d.). Migration can either be internal; within one country or international, which is from one country or continent to another. For the purpose of this study, sport labor migration is
defined as the movement of elite sports talents from a sports system in one country or continent to another sports system in another continent (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Emphasis is laid on the movement of players from developing countries to Europe in general and specific attention is given to movement of players from the elite soccer league in Ghana to wealthier leagues in Europe (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Thus, the definition of migration for the purpose of this study considers it as a rational decision making process whether it is planned or not planned (Zhang et al., 2006).

Sports labor migration occurs at different levels within countries internally, between nations within the same continent, and internationally and globally between countries in different continents (Bale & Maguire, 1994). This study considers migration at the global level, for instance migration between countries in different continents. The focus is on the migration of male athletes. Therefore, the factors that contribute to this movement of athletic labor and the subsequent effects are considered at the international and global levels of sports migration. The study dwells on the global migration of elite soccer athletes from developing countries in general and Ghana in particular. For the purpose of this study soccer and football are used interchangeably. Athletes who migrate from one country are referred to as sports labor migrants. The countries from which these athletes migrate are referred to as donor countries, migrant countries and/or sending countries. The countries where elite athletes migrate to are referred to as the receiving or destination nations or countries.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A variety of theoretical models have been proposed from economists and sociologists to explain the phenomenon of labor migration. However, no one theory completely explains the reason why migration begins although all these theories contribute towards an understanding of why migration occurs (Massey et al., 1993). Although this research resorts to the assumptions of the neoclassical economic theory and the dependency theory to investigate the motivations of players to migrate, a brief overview of other migration theories are also given.

Human Capital theory

The desire by individuals to migrate is explained by the human capital theory as an act of investment in their skill which in the future will bring greater economic returns to them. That is, the skills that human beings possess, is a source of capital (Sweetland, 1996). Therefore individuals migrate to places they perceive as bringing higher returns on their investment on their capital which in this case is their skill or ability. Sport migrants see their ability to do sports as a source of capital and their decision to move to another international destination to ply their trade as a move to invest in their skills and ability for greater economic returns. Thus migration constitutes the decision by individuals to invest in their human capital (Sjaastad, 1962).

World System theory

The world system theory sees migration as a result of economic globalization and market penetration across national boundaries (Portes & Walton; Petras; Castells; Sassen; Morawska; as cited by Massey et al., 1993). According to this theory, which is associated with the work of Wallerstein (1976), a world system of commerce and communication has been developed over time based on a capitalist world economy (Bale & Maguire, 1994). For Wallerstein, there are
core states that dominate and control the exploitation of resources and production. These states derive wealth from their control over manufacturing and agriculture and they have centralized government systems. Countries that are linked in various dependent trading relationships with the core states are seen as semi-peripheral to the core states whilst states that depend on selling cash crops directly to the core states are seen as peripheral states. As stated by Massey et al. (1993) in this scheme, the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, noncapitalist societies creates a mobile population that is prone to moving abroad. According to the world systems theory, the non-core states rely on dependent trading in the world economy where they trade in their athletic labor just as they sell cash crops. In the relationship between the non-core states and core states, terms and conditions set by core states result in the deskilling of the semi-peripheral and peripheral states (Bale & Maguire, 1994). This is to say that when developed countries, which are more capitalist in nature, establish economic relations with developing countries, which are seen as peripheral and semi-peripheral, there is the tendency for the most talented workers within developing countries to want to move abroad (Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007). Thus, the very talents that semi-peripheral and peripheral states have invested their scarce resources in, are easily lured away by the core states that have control over the athletic labor and media-sport production (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Therefore the world system theory sees migration as an unavoidable phenomenon, since it is seen as part of the globalization process where markets interrelate and boundaries are seen as nonexistent in the quest for increased capital.

**Neoclassical Economics theory**

The neoclassical economic theory includes the macro perspective of structural determinants and micro perspective of individual decision making due to the difference in wages
in different geographical locations (Ranis & Fei, and Todaro as cited in Arango, 2000). In the macro perspective of the neoclassical theory, migration is attributed to the disparities in wages between countries, which in turn reflect on the welfare disparities. This is to say that, migration will bring a solution to wage differentials within different countries and locations and the elimination of these differentials will also put a stop to migration. The micro economic aspect of the theory looks at migration as the result of a rational decision making process by individuals based on the differentials in wages and welfare between their place of origin and their destination countries. Massey et al. (1993) stated that, neoclassical economics theory conceives of migration as individual decision making that is necessitated by income maximization as a result of the differential in wages and employment conditions between countries.

The neoclassical economic theory of international migration (Arango, 2000), stated that international migration, just like its internal counterpart national level migration (Bale & Maguire, 1994), is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor (Massey et al., 1993). Furthermore the neoclassical economic theory states that this decision by individuals to migrate is made on a cost and benefit estimate (Todaro, 1980). Cost may include living expenses, material cost of travel and the cost of maintenance of the individual. Benefits on the other hand may include the returns on income, exposure to other opportunities and improvement on performance and welfare among other things. According to the neoclassical economic theory, individuals make a rational decision to migrate when they determine that such benefits outweigh the costs in their destination country as compared to the benefits in their country of origin. Therefore in the bid to improve their wellbeing, individuals make a rational decision to move to places where they will receive higher rewards for their labor as compared to what they will make in their countries of origin (Arango, 2000). Migration is therefore a
voluntary act based on the individual’s comparison of their present state and the future gains of moving to another destination to ply the same trade. Therefore, pondering on alternatives available to them, individuals tend to migrate to a destination where a higher net return is achieved.

Massey et al. (1993) highlighted these implicit propositions and assumptions of the neoclassical economics theory as follows:

1. International migration of workers is caused by difference in wage rates between countries.
2. The elimination of wage differentials will end the movement of labor, and migration will not occur in the absence of such differentials.
3. International flows of human capital – that is, highly skilled workers - respond to differences in the rate of return to human capital, which may be different from the overall wage rate, yielding a distinct pattern of migration that may be opposite to that of unskilled workers.

Therefore, individuals who are highly skilled workers are likely to migrate when they can have higher rate of returns on their skill in their destination countries as compared to that of their native country.

4. Labor markets are the primary mechanisms by which international flows of labor are induced; other kinds of markets do not have important effects on international migration.
5. The way for governments to control migration flows is to regulate or influence labor markets in sending and /or receiving countries.
However, the relative differential wages in different countries and the rational decisions made by individual players in response to the wage differentials cannot be the sole basis for migration (Taylor, 2006). Evident in the neoclassical economic theory of migration are shortfalls (Massey et al., 1993) that make it impossible to solely ascribe the reason to migrate to only the difference in wages between countries and the decision by individuals to move to where they receive greater returns. The heterogeneity and complexity of the realities of the migration phenomenon raises questions on why there has not been a conforming increase of international migrants as per the prescriptions of the neoclassical theories. That is, the number of international migrants in reality should be higher than what actually occurs if migration was to conform only to the assertions of the neoclassical theory (Arango, 2000). Thus different disparities in wages contribute to the decision to migrate. However, the neoclassical economic theories do not completely explain the global differences in migration of sports in recent times.

Another shortfall of the neoclassical theory of migration as stated by Arango (2000) can be seen in the area of differential migration. That is, countries with similar structures have experienced different levels of migration and this is evident both in migrant and receiving countries. For instance, football players from Cote d’Ivoire migrate to clubs in France but Ghanaian players mostly are found to migrate to different European countries such as Belgium, Spain, Holland, England and France (Darby and Solberg, 2010; Poli, 2006a). The neoclassical economics theory also does not take into consideration the political restrictions in the international restrictions of labor. For instance some sports labor unions, such as in European football, have rules that argue for quotas and qualification thresholds to be applied to potential migrants (Maguire, 2008). Consequently, some restrictive policies deter the movement of labor migrants in unascertainable but possibly large proportions (Arango, 2000). Therefore in internal
migration, where restrictions may not exist and the cost of cultural adaptation is lower, the neoclassical theory paradigm will be applicable. However, political factors such as the restrictions to labor (Frick, 2009) are influential in the ability to migrate internationally. In as much as labor economics plays a vital role in the decision to migrate by individuals, the neoclassical economic theory downplays non-economic factors such as political and cultural reasons.

Although there are shortfalls in the neoclassical economic theories, as mentioned above, an appreciation of the difference in the wages in developing and developed countries and in this case, Africa and Europe is an important aspect to this theory. The absence of relatively high wages in developing countries such as Ghana (Darby & Solberg, 2010), compared to other developed countries can therefore be said to be an underlying factor that influences players’ decisions to migrate. Therefore, despite the fact that other reasons may play a role in the decision of elite players to migrate, it is evident that the difference in wages is a major reason why these local stars decide to migrate to play in wealthier leagues.

**Dependency Theory**

According to the dependency theory, migration is a result of the uneven manner and form of global development (Bale & Maguire, 1994). That is, countries that are underdeveloped tend to have their workforce yielding to the temptation to ply their trade in more developed countries. The dependency theory states that, the global sports system largely operates through multinationals or organizations that are dominated by developed or first world nations. Even though the global sports system does not exclusively operate by these organizations or multinationals, their operations actively underdevelop the third world countries (Bale & Maguire, 1994). This is made possible through the exclusion of the third world from the centre of
political decision making processes as well as economic rewards derived for the world sports economy. Since the developed world largely controls the global sports systems and as such is in a better position to attract sports labor talents, it is easier for players from developed countries to opt to play in the wealthier leagues in order to reap higher economic benefits. Similarly, players from relatively less wealthy leagues in developing countries see plying their trade with wealthier leagues in developing countries as an opportunity to be exposed to the global sport economy. This will in turn help these players, based on their performance, to attract the attention of other clubs who are able to offer them a greater exposure in the soccer world. Such dependent development strands (Bale & Maguire, 1994), present in the dependency theory, affirms that third world countries develop but that their development is tied to their dependence on developed countries. The flaw in this strand of the dependency theory is the possibility of some developing countries breaking out of this dependent development and developing on their own. That is, the conception that there is the possibility of some third world countries and some of their institutional sectors breaking away from their reliance on developed countries and reversing their earlier disadvantaged positions. This possible reversal strand in the dependency theory is referred to as the dependency reversal. Therefore some developing countries are conceived to have the possibility to reverse their previous relationships to their advantage and to be able to develop. That is to say that, some developing countries are able to have a dependent relationship and develop to a point when they are able to free themselves from the disadvantageous relationship of depending on developed countries or core states to develop.

There is a good linkage or fit between the neoclassical economic theories and the human capital theory and between the dependency theory and world system theory. Individuals invest their talent or skill as a capital in the bid to increase their value and be able to make higher
economic returns. Therefore it will be safe to assume that in this instance, players will move to places where they are able to improve on their skills as a human capital and at the same time be able to make higher return on their improved skill where there are higher benefits to their improved skill as explained by the neoclassical economics theories. Similarly, whilst the economic relations between core and capitalist states and peripheral states such as developing countries bring some development to these developing countries, is mostly through a dependent relationship. Thus since most of the sports economy is controlled by core and capitalist economies that are developed, non-capitalist economies and for that matter developing countries find their sports talents moving into developed countries in order to also be able to have access to benefits that accrue from the sports market economy. This interesting relationship explains why individuals from developing countries may decide to migrate to countries or economies that offer them the best platform to ply their trade. They are able to invest in their skill and by so doing receive greater economic returns on them. And their development is based on their ability to have access to the developed and wealthier leagues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of player migration on the local sport systems in developing countries using the Ghana Premier League as a case study. The review of literature will therefore focus on: (a) sports labor migration and its effects on the sending countries; and, (b) the Ghana Premier league and the effects of migration on the league. It takes a brief look at the history of the migration phenomenon in sports. Next, a general overview of Ghana soccer and in specific the Ghana Premier League is discussed with regards to player
migration. Finally, the effects of migration on the local sport systems in developing countries such as Ghana is presented.

**Sport Labor Migration**

The migration of athletes is not a new phenomenon in today’s world. The phenomenon dates back to the industrialized periods when sports were modernized with rules and regulations (Magee & Sugden, 2002). In today’s global world, the increasing feature of sport labor migration in the form of players, coaches and ancillary staff cannot go unnoticed (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Maguire, 1999; Saar, 1972). As stated by Frick (2009), the flow of football players from different continents to top leagues in Europe has been on the ascendance. This increase in the flow of soccer migrants could be attributed to the “Bosman ruling” in 1995 that saw the European court of justice ruling in favor of Jean-Marc Bosman, a Belgian player who took his club to court for impeding his freedom of movement from one club to another within the European Union (Frick, 2009). Frick indicated that the “Bosman ruling” may have opened an avalanche of opportunities to the freedom of movement by sports labor migrants. While recognizing that this decision may have impacted player movement, the increase in athletic labor migration cannot be solely attributed to the effects of the “Bosman ruling”.

**Push and Pull Factors of Migration**

The reasons that make people migrate from one place to another have been referred to as “push” and “pull” factors (Maguire, 2008). Push factors are those factors that are present in the sending countries that make individuals decide to leave or that compel individuals to leave their home countries for their destination countries (“A definition of migration,” n.d.). Examples of these push factors are political instability, poverty, lack of employment, war and lack of
exposure. In sports labor migration, some of these push factors could be identified as the lack of opportunity for exposure, lack of infrastructure, and the relatively lower financial rewards in migrant countries as compared to that in their destination countries (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Pull factors on the other hand are referred to as the factors in the destination countries which encourage people to move (Maguire, 1999; 2008). A chance of a better job and education, peace and security, a better wage and religious freedom are some examples of pull factors that motivate individuals to move (“A definition of migration,” n.d.). A study of football migration and globalization from a historical perspective, and with reference to the European football economy, (Taylor, 2006) stated that “weak national economies and financial crises have often worked to ‘push’ players out while, on the pull side, the wealthiest European leagues in particular, have been able to offer unrivalled financial reward” (p.16). The opportunities made available to sports labor migrants in their destination countries are major determinants for their departure from their home countries. Higher wages, better training facilities for development of skills and a better exposure to the sports economy, which consequently enhances the football career of these migrants are some examples of pull factors that influence some players to move from their countries (Breton, 2000; Cornelissen & Solberg, 2007; Darby & Solberg, 2010; Haug, 2008; Kapur & McHale, 2005; Maguire, 1999; Poli, 2006a).

Other Countries’ Studies

The international dimension of sports and hence sport labor migration has always been a major part of global sports (Thibault, 2009). According to Horne (2005), sport labor migration has received an increased amount of research over a long period and has received increased attention since the early 1990s regarding international and transcontinental migration (e.g., Agergaard, 2008; Bale & Maguire, 1994; Breton, 2000; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Maguire, 1996;
Research into the exodus of elite athletes between nations has received attention over the past two decades (Maguire, 2004). A number of studies have focused on sport migration from developing countries in general (e.g., Darby, Akindes & Kirwin, 2007; Poli, 2006a, 2006b), and Africa in particular (e.g., Darby, 2007a, 2007b; Darby & Solberg, 2010). Bale and Maguire (1994) co-edited a collection of migration literature that encompassed sports such as baseball, hockey, cricket, track and field and soccer. The motivations and experiences of athletic migrants, as indicated by Elliot & Maguire (2008), vary considerably. The presence of politics, history, economics, geography, and culture can all be seen to be influential in determining the motivations of athletic migrants and in affecting the ways in which they experience the migration process. It is not possible to fully capture the complexities of athletic migrant movements by concluding that migration occurs as the result of any single causal factor (Elliot & Maguire, 2008).

Breton (2000) illustrated how Latin American migrant players have been in Major League Baseball (MLB) since 1902 and how these migrant players flee their third world poverty with the intention of earning a better living in baseball in the United States (US). Some of these migrants find themselves not able to achieve their dreams of becoming professionals whereas those that are able to achieve this dream are lost to the leagues in their native lands. Nine out of ten best hitters in the MLB 1999 season were Latinos or had Latino roots (Breton, 2000). This has contributed to the understanding of sport labor migration where economic benefits, as assumed by the neoclassical economic theories (Massey et al., 1993), are motivating factors to player exodus. Similarly, in a study of the migration of baseball players from the Japanese league to MLB (Takahashi & Horne, 2006), economic underpinnings were found as well as the need for exposure in the big leagues (MLB). A trend in the migration of baseball players from Japan to
MLB saw an increase in player migration from 1 before 1982 to 21 in 2005 (Takahashi & Horne, 2006). The media focus on the exploits of these migrant players was also found to have helped to create an economic boost for MLB through fan (Japanese) patronage and corporate sponsorship from Japanese companies. This is not to state that economic reasons are the sole factors that underlie players’ decision to migrate (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). However economic factors were identified as major underpinnings for player migration especially from one league to wealthier leagues (Poli, 2006a). Beyond the economic reason to migrate, the need to develop one’s career was identified as another factor that advances the exodus of migrant players (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). Maguire stated that sport labor migrants sometimes view migration as a means to have access to better training and technical support in their destination countries. Players view migration to wealthier and bigger leagues as the only means to get the opportunity to play at the highest level (Maguire, 2004). Thus migration is viewed as a means to enhance the career of migrants in another country where they have access to facilities and systems that promote their development, which is in line with the human capital theory (Massey et al., 1993).

In highlighting the issues of migrant players in the global sports processes, Maguire (1996) used the experiences of Canadian hockey migrants in Great Britain. Maguire referred to the Canadian migrant hockey players in the United Kingdom as the Canadian “blade runners”. These migrants made up an average of 33% of the total number of global ice hockey circuits in the 1990s. Maguire indicated that the Canadian pattern of migration was a blend of economic, cultural, ethnic and political factors. Thus, they involved a combination of all the types of typologies identified in the previous section of this study. Another example of the movement of sports labor between nations is the presence of North American players in the English basketball league as depicted by Maguire & Falcous (2005). Migrant players experience different
receptions from locals within their various destination countries and this has a way of affecting their migrant experience in relation to their chosen professions. England had been referred to as “cricket’s global finishing school” (Maguire & Stead, 1996). Many migrant cricketers from diverse countries had been part of English cricket for a very long time. These overseas professional cricketers had come from places such as Australia, the Afro-Caribbean, South Asia and Africa plying their trade both on short term and long term bases in England. In a study of Hungarian male footballers, Molnar (2006) identified that economics played a major part in the migration patterns of Hungarian players. Molnar found out that players left the local league for other economically advanced leagues in Europe. Much as the trade of sports labor may be beneficial to players, teams, managers, leagues and nations benefiting from these sports talents, it also comes with its related problems (Thibault, 2009). In soccer (i.e., football), Brazil has approximately 500 of its soccer talents playing outside Brazil (Foer, 2004) and it is argued that Brazil produces the highest number of football talent (Wertheim as cited in Thibault, 2009). Thibault further stated that, the best talents are those consistently pursued by the leagues in Europe who take advantage of the not so viable economy of the Southern Americans and deprive the local leagues of their first rate rosters.

Football migration is not a new phenomenon but rather has a long history in the global world of sports (Taylor, 2006). As the most dominant force in sports labor migration, Europe is the destination of many soccer labor migrants (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). A fundamental feature of all professional sports is the economic migration of players and football is no exception (Gerrard, 2002). Comparable to “Brain Drain”, “Kicker Drain” is a comparable term in football as stated by Ocampo (2008) in a United Nations report (see Figure 1).
Figure 1: Percentage of players from national teams who normally play in other countries

“Kicker Drain” (Ocampo, 2008, p. 4)

In other studies, the trading of the sports talent from developing countries to wealthier leagues has been referred to as “Muscle Drain” (e.g., Bale & Maguire, 1994; Darby, 2007a, 2007b; Gerrard, 2002; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001). A compilation of different articles presented in the 2008 Feet-drain conference proceedings by Walters and Rossi (2009) also referred to the migration of sports talents as “Feet Drain”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Migration of African Football Talent

The transfer of African football players to Europe has a long history but it was not until recent years that African footballers have become visible in some European countries (Hallinan & Jackson, 2000a). Portugal is a major recipient of African soccer talents from countries such as Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau (Darby, 2007a). Arthur Wharton was the world’s first black professional footballer who migrated to Europe at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of 1900. He came from a wealthy Gold Coast (now Ghana) family, and enjoyed national celebrity in England as an all-round athlete (Hallinan & Jackson, 2008). In the 1930s, French clubs are said to have recruited mostly Moroccan players from the north of Africa (Poli, 2006a). Being aware of football development in the Western part of Africa and the potential of players in the region after the Second World War, clubs from France ventured into that region too. Darby (2007a) posited that the broader socio-economic and political challenges of most African nations as well as the underdeveloped nature of the game of football in Africa as compared to Europe, makes it understandable why many African players decide to ply their trade outside the continent. In a study of African migrant players in the 2002 FIFA World Cup, Gerrard (2002) identified that among the total of 115 African players that represented the continent at the tournament, only 25 players were playing in Africa (see Table 1). The other 90 players played their professional football in Europe and other parts of the world. Europe had 87 of these players as against 3 for other parts of the world.
Some literature has pointed to the influencing role of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the migration of African players (e.g., Darby et al., 2007; Darby, 2007a; Domingos, 2007). “The recruitment of African players by professional European clubs extends back to the colonial era. It should therefore come as no surprise that the football clubs of those countries that had a significant imperial presence in Africa were the main beneficiaries of African migrant talent” (Darby et al., 2007: p.145). In a presentation on African football talents in Europe, Poli (2006a) indicated the presence of colonial linkages was evident in the migration patterns of African players to European football leagues. Based on this assertion, an assumption could be made that the end of colonialism should lead to a reduction in the rate of trading in African talents to Europe. However, the collapse of colonial rule in Africa did little to restrict this process and by the 1970’s there was a steady flow of African football talent to France and Belgium (Broere & van der Drift, as cited in Darby et al., 2007). However, a critical observation of the countries that receive African soccer talents in Europe today will reveal that colonial and neo-colonial ties

Table 1: Geographic distribution of domestic team affiliations, African World Cup 2002 players (Gerrard, 2002, p. 51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic Team Affiliation</th>
<th>Cameroon</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of World</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Darby, 2007a) cannot be singled out as the only reasons for this phenomenon of proliferation of African football talent in Europe (Maguire, 1999). There is a significant number of African players plying their trade in European countries that had no colonial ties to their migrant nations. A typical example is the presence of Ivorian international players such as Salomon Kalou, Kolo Toure and Didier Drogba in the English Premier League (African football, 2009). The home countries of these West African players were colonized by the French and yet their country of trade is England and not France. Hence colonial ties cannot be the basis of explanation for their presence in the English elite league. The English Premier League, which is arguably the best league (Thibault, 2009), attracts African soccer talents from all over the continent with no colonial patterns present. Similarly, Ghanaian players such as Andre Dede Ayew, Mathew Amoah and Ransford Osei do not play in England even though Britain was the colonial masters of Ghana, which was called the Gold Coast. Maguire (1999) stated that even though colonial ties may be a factor influencing African talent destinations, colonial ties alone cannot be what ties these players to their respective destinations in the developed countries and Europe in particular (Maguire, 1999).

Considering the nature of the economic underdevelopment in the local leagues in Africa, it is clear that a major factor for the migration of African players to Europe and other wealthier leagues is the need to maximize the economic value of their talent (Rottenberg as cited by Gerrard, 2002; Massey et al., 1993; Bale & Maguire, 1994). Additionally, the economic status of the leagues in Europe coupled with their higher rankings in global sport development puts them in the position of making decisions that enhance their control of the sports economy (Bale & Maguire, 1994). African players abroad are not only found in Europe (Darby, 2000b) but also in other parts of the world such as countries located in the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, United Arab
Emirates, etc) and Asia (Poli, 2006a). As indicated by Darby (2007b), the migration of African football talents is more defused and random in recent times since African players are now migrating to all places in Europe and beyond. Thus African talents will go where their trade will bring them their expected maximum economic returns (Massey et al., 1993). This therefore indicates that the primary motive behind players’ migration from Africa is the need to maximize their economic returns on their football skills.

Developing countries that are also part of the global sport system but have lower economic status in the sport market economy depend on decisions by the first world nations to develop (Darby, 2000a & b; 2001). Developing countries like Africa therefore underutilize their sports talent and in the process lose them to more powerful nations within the global sports process (Maguire, 1999; Darby, 2009). This process can therefore lead to the “dependent development” or “dependent underdevelopment” of talents from developing countries (Gunder, 1974). When Europe and the bigger leagues are the only option for these players to play at the highest level (Maguire, 2004), the inclination of African players is to migrate to play in the wealthier European leagues for their personal development. Thus their desire to exit the local scene to enhance their career results in a dependent underdevelopment (Bale & Maguire, 1994) because their exit adversely affects the local sport system by way of deskilling it of sport talents (Maguire, 2008).

**Effects on Developing Countries**

The international exodus of players from leagues in developing countries to wealthier leagues in Europe benefits these migrant players and donor nations in some instances (Gerrard, 2002). These benefits include among others the economic returns to the players and the
perceived advantage that they serve as role models for up and coming stars (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). When players from developing countries migrate to wealthier leagues in Europe, it offers them the opportunity to better sports development and also provides a way for them to escape the poverty that is present in their migrant nations (Darby, 2007b). Other benefits are that these migrant players serve as role models in sports for the younger players in their native countries. This may in turn increase sports participation in developing countries. These departed stars also send back some income to support their families in particular and their home economy as a whole (Gerrard, 2002). Successful players can become unofficial ambassadors who may in turn be able to attract economic benefits and also create opportunities for others to also aspire to have international success (Gerrard, 2002).

However, athletic labor migration from developing countries has its adverse effects on the sending countries. Migration of sports talents over time results in the deskilling of the donor countries (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). That is the loss of talents to the wealthier leagues in developed countries deprive the local sport systems in developing countries the service of their best local stars (Thibault, 2009). Consequently, developing countries become a nursing ground for talents that end up in the wealthier leagues in developed economies. As stated by Bale and Maguire (1994), with regards to a world system theory, non-core states invest time and resources in their most talented workers only to have them lured away by the core states whose wealth derive from the control over athletic labor and the media-sport production complex. In some instances, players who do not make the expected mark and do not get into teams among the lower divisions in their destination countries are either abandoned or they refuse to return to their home countries as failures (e.g., Darby, 2007b; Hallinan & Jackson, 2008). This in turn ends up in the wastage of football talents that could have been at the disposal of local systems in
developing countries (Walters & Rossi, 2009). In the event that they return, most of these returnee players find it very difficult to rediscover themselves in the local leagues and their talent thus is lost (Darby, 2007a).

Another adverse effect that the economic migration of sports talent from developing countries has on local sport systems is that sports in these donor countries is underdeveloped as identified by Gerrard (2002). Gerrard suggested that the luring away of sports talents without adequate compensation discourages sports systems from investing into sporting developments. Furthermore, Gerrard posits that stakeholders are discouraged from investing in the development of local talents only to lose them to the bigger leagues in Europe. The financial incentives by way of huge salaries offered to local stars by wealthier leagues make it impossible for local systems to retain local stars (Darby, 2009; Darby & Solberg, 2010). This creates a system where local players are always on the move in keeping with the least opportunity offered them by player agents and clubs that are involved in sale of players (Hallinan & Jackson, 2008). Clubs from these developing countries find the sale of their prized players as the most convenient means for getting some funds to run their clubs (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Since clubs in Africa cannot match the economic incentives and sport media exposure opportunities offered by wealthier clubs in Europe, local clubs find themselves in a position of dependent trading (Bale & Maguire, 1994) since they go by terms set by European interests. Thus, developing countries find themselves depending on the developed countries for their development as stated in Gunder’s (1974) dependency theory.

The lack of media coverage (Poli, 2006a) was identified as another adverse effect that the migration of local talents has on local sport systems in developing countries. An example is recorded by Poli where exploits of players playing for the biggest European clubs (Emmanuel
Eboue, Didier Drogba, Kolo Toure, etc) are given more space than coverage allotted to local games. Through this concentration on the exploits of departed local stars in foreign leagues, the focus of the local fans is diverted to the foreign leagues in which these deserted local stars play. Consequently, local fans tend to lose interest in watching local games that are bereft of stars since their first team rosters are lured away into the bigger leagues (Thibault, 2009) and this results in less patronage of local games as stated by Kapur and McHale (2005). This less patronage of local games potentially impacts TV rights and sponsorships. Another effect of the “Kicker Drain” (Ocampo, 2008) of African football talents on local sports systems is evident in the creation of a workforce that is prone to migrate (Massey et al., 1993). Thus the local sport system always grapples with the difficulty of retention because even those players left behind are prone to migrate when the least chance is offered them by wealthier leagues (Darby, 2009). As evidenced by Kapur and McHale (2005), those remaining behind (TRBs) from a country’s workforce are left worse off when a significant fraction of their best labor force migrate.

Finally, when national assignments clash with European clubs’ assignments where these players ply their trade, local sports systems are faced with the difficulty of assembling their best players in time for national assignments. This situation also leaves players contemplating on the club versus country decision making as to where to lay their allegiance. In some cases players have chosen their club career over their national teams (Sports Homepage, 2011a).

In summary, the adverse effects of player migration on local sports systems identified in the literature are: (a) the deskilling of local sports systems of their sports talents; (b) the underdevelopment of local sports systems; (c) the less patronage of local games, which potentially impacts sponsorship and TV rights; (d) the creation of a workforce that is prone to
migrate; and (e) the difficulty for local sports systems in assembling their best talents in time for national assignments.

**Ghana**

Leagues from West Africa are the leading suppliers of football talent from Africa to Europe (Poli, 2006b). For the purpose of this study, Ghana’s elite soccer league was chosen because it is one of the leagues in a developing country in West Africa that has been plagued with elite player exodus from the 1990’s to today (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Additionally, Ghana is my home country and I have been involved in football over the past 23 years at the elementary, secondary, graduate and post graduate levels of soccer in Ghana. At the recent 2008 African Cup of Nations (CAN) tournament hosted by Ghana, I was the volunteers’ coordinator for the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for the continental championship (CAN 2008 Volunteer, 2007). Having lived in Ghana for 30 years, I have some personal experience with the migration phenomenon in Ghana soccer and this also influenced the selection of the Ghana Premier League as the case for this study. Therefore this section of the literature review provides a brief overview of Ghana football and in specific the Ghana Premier league, which is the professional soccer league in the West African country. The review identifies patterns of player migration in the premier league and the effects of player exodus over the past years on the development of the league.

Located in West Africa, the republic of Ghana is a small country with a population of 22 million people (The country of Ghana, 2011). Previously known as the Gold Coast, the country became a British colony in 1874 and attained independence in 1957. Ghana recently celebrated its 54th anniversary and is regarded as one of the most politically, economically and socially
stable countries in West Africa (Diehl, Hegley & Laue, 2009). Even though Ghana is endowed with a lot of natural resources such as timber, gold, diamonds and cocoa, the country depends heavily on international financial and technical assistance (Economic indicators, 2010). The West African country of Ghana had its domestic football structure as a legacy from the British colonial rulers (Black Stars). Football in the early years after independence was tied to government or state support. Cape Coast, which was the Capital of the then Gold Coast (Ghana), was the birthplace of football and in 1903 the first football team, the Excelsior Club of Cape Coast, was formed (Black Stars). This was followed by Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko Football Clubs in 1911 and 1935 respectively. These two clubs went on to become the two most glamorous clubs in the West African country (Shourin, 2008, January 24). Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, saw the value of using sporting victories as a means to creating pride and self esteem in Ghanaians and the people of Africa as a whole. He therefore saw the need to use football, the most popular sport, as the tool to propagate this pan-Africanism (Shourin, 2008, January 24) and directed the rebuilding of Ghana’s soccer to Ohene Djan who was to become the first sports director in Ghana (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Kwame Nkrumah established a club himself and named it the Real Republicans. Under the stewardship of Ohene Djan, Ghana sought many international victories as a means to establish patriotism amongst citizens. This was not before two splinter football Associations had agreed to come together to form the United Gold Coast Amateur Football Association headed by John Darkwa and Richard Akwei as chairman and vice chairman respectively. Taking a cue from the English FA, Ohene Djan launched the National Football League in 1958 in Kumasi, the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Black Stars). With the establishment of the national league, Nkrumah invested in the domestic game though not to the same level as he supported the national team. All pointed to a
bright future for football in Ghana and the country’s league was the yardstick in those early years and its national team was an assemblage of the best local talent from each club. This made Ghana the dominant African team in those times and the nation went ahead to win the inaugural African Cup of Nations. After Nkrumah was overthrown by a military coup in 1966, the Ghanaian economy experienced a long period of economic and political unrest and the amount of state investment in the local league declined, with most resources channelled to the national teams (Darby & Solberg, 2010). The domestic league and youth football therefore suffered with less resources and thus relied on gate proceeds and other investments from private entities to survive. This lack of economic support for youth football and the local league had its effects on existing structures and facilities since there was no support, or even the needed investment for maintenance and improvement of those structures for the juvenile or colts soccer league.

Ghana has a 16 club professional league system run by the Ghana Football Association (GFA), which is the administrative and governing body for association and professional football in Ghana. The GFA, in a bid to introduce some vibrancy into the Ghana Premier League sought to introduce a two tier league where the clubs had some autonomy in sourcing their own funding to better their lot in the local league. This decision would encourage the two biggest clubs, Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko, King Faisal Football Club, and other league clubs to see the benefits in selling advertising rights as well as getting apparel sponsorship with multinational corporations (Darby & Solberg, 2010).

Corporate sponsorships however have most benefited the national teams. For instance, in 2005, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports secured a sponsorship deal worth $ 3 million with Goldfields Ghana Limited (a leading mining company in Ghana), all of which was allocated to the national team, Black Stars. This was followed by a financial donation from the beverage
sponsors, Guinness; kit sponsors Puma; and $3 million from FIFA for world qualification. Not much corporate investment or support is seen to be going towards the league clubs or at the youth level. In recent times, sponsorship by telecommunication companies such as MTN, OneTouch and Globacom have gone a long way towards giving some reprieve to club owners and administrators who are finding it very difficult to get the needed funding to provide for their clubs the essential training facilities for accelerated sport development (Darby, 2000a). Clubs in the Ghana Premier League today still continue to grapple with issues relating to the lack of funding to acquire adequate training facilities, necessary infrastructure and respectable salaries for their players (Darby, 2000b). Player salary remains a major factor within the Ghana Premier League. Most of the clubs do not own their own training fields and therefore have to make do with what they can afford by renting some fields for practice. These fields are not the best due to the fact that practicing at national stadia comes with a cost that most clubs cannot afford on a constant basis. As stated by Poli (2006b) the economic disparity between players in the Ghana Premier league and their counterparts in Europe is one that mirrors the general sport market economy between Europe and Africa. Player salary is a main factor that pushes players out of the Ghana premier league (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak, who are Ghana’s two leading clubs in terms of support base and finance, are in a better financial position than other clubs in the league and are able to afford high wages, winning bonuses and signing fees. Apart from these two clubs, the average salaries at other clubs in the league are nothing to write home about even in Ghanaian terms. For instance Kumasi Asante Kotoko can afford to pay players a salary of $500 per month (Okyere, 2008) with winning bonuses of say $200 - $800 depending on how important the game involved may be to the fortunes of the club either in the local league or in an African continental club championship.
Darby and Solberg showed that the monthly salary for a player in the Ghana Premier league ranges between $100 and $200, an amount that cannot favourably compare to the salary of say, a graduate employee in the civil service. For example, a Ghana Trade Union Congress income report for 2004 pegged the average net salary of a graduate employee in Ghana at $573 (Trade Union Congress, 2004). This gives an indication of how low the wages of local Ghanaian players are compared to their professional counterparts elsewhere in Europe. An example of this wage difference can be seen in the case of Ghana’s Michael Essien who earns a monthly salary of $782,969.99 in Europe with Chelsea Football Club (Hughes, 2010). Michael Essien’s salary in Europe contrasts with the estimated $300 that he might have been earning monthly at Liberty Professionals Football Club, which was his former club in the Ghana Premier League. The situation is not any different with all other players that have left the Ghana Premier League to ply their trade in the leagues in Europe.

The current administration of the GFA led by its president Kwesi Nyantakyi, has exhibited a commitment to help clubs have greater control over the league system so the latter can have more say in sponsorships and other revenue generating activities of the Premier League. While this move by the current administration will help incorporate the Premier League clubs in the management of football, the Ghana Premier League continues to operate with a degree of financial uncertainty and instability (Darby & Solberg, 2010).

**Football Talent Migration and the Ghana Premier League**

While Arthur Wharton was the first Ghanaian and African to play in Britain in 1886 through to the 1900s (Johnson et al., 2009), Ghanaian players were not a constant feature of the migrant flows to European leagues up to the post colonial era when most players migrated to
France and Belgium (Darby, 2007). As stated by Darby, African players migrating to Europe increased significantly in the 1990s and by the year 2000, it was estimated that 350 African players played their football in Europe at various levels (Ricci, as cited in Darby 2007). Some pioneers such as C. K. Gyamfi, Abdul Razak and Ibrahim Sunday, played outside the shores of Ghana prior to the 1990s before other Ghanaian players like Anthony Yeaboah, Abedi Pele and Samuel Osei Kuffuor featured prominently in Europe (Shourin, 2008).

Much as colonial underpinnings could be identified in the migration patterns of African talents to Europe, Ghana as a country was identified as a typical example of how different some African countries flow in the migration of players (Darby & Solberg, 2010; see Figure 2). Ghanaian players were found to be present in different continents and countries by Darby (2009) irrespective of the fact that Ghana was colonized by the British.

Figure 2: Destination of Ghanaian migrants (Darby, 2009, p. 152)
The estimated number of registered Ghanaian players plying their trade abroad at the end of 2010 was 367 (Ghanaian Players Abroad by Country, 2011). A majority of these migrant players ply their trade in Europe with a few scattered in the Americas (Canada and the United States) and countries such as India, South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Ghanaian players abroad by country, 2011; See Figure 2). This figure however represents those players who are registered with records of their migration in existence. As stated by Poli (2006b),”the presence of African players is not at all limited to Europe. Indeed, African players find themselves in the four corners of the world especially in the countries of the Persian Gulf and in South East Asia” (p. 404). Thus Ghana’s diffuse pattern of migration explained that Ghanaian players will migrate to any place that allows them to increase their earning power (Darby, 2009).

Focusing on the Ghana Premier League, the players migrate to all parts of the globe where they can maximize their earning power as discovered by Darby and Solberg (2010). Darby and Solberg posited that the influx of football talents from Ghana to Europe during the early 1990 was influenced by Ghana’s 1991 and 1995 Under-17 World Cup victories. In recent times the exploits of players such as Asamoah Gyan, Michael Essien, Suley Muntari in the English Premier League and players like Stephen Appiah and Kwadwo Asamoah in the Italian Serie A, had also contributed to the increased interest of Ghanaian players to play abroad (Darby & Solberg, 2010). All these players had once featured in the local league and therefore Those Remaining Behind (TRB) see these migrant stars as role models and also aspire to attain such professional levels in Europe (Kapur & McHale, 2005).

Michael Essien, who played for Liberty Professionals, a local Premier League side until quite recently, was the highest purchased African player. His transfer fee from Olympic Lyon of France to Chelsea in the English Premier League was 24.4 million pound sterling (African
football, 2009). In an interview with Nii Odartey Lamptey, a onetime professional youngster who plied his trade at Anderlecht in Belgium, Darby and Solberg (2010) showed how financial need is the main factor that motivates players to move to wealthier leagues.

The fact that Ghanaian football players are prepared to travel so widely to countries such as India, Thailand or Vietnam in search of contracts, reveals the strength of the ‘push’ factors that encourage them to leave Ghana. Clearly, the key motivation is simply to escape a football and social context that provides little in the way of opportunities for financial reward. (pp. 125 & 126)

For most Ghanaians the game of soccer serves as a means to come out of poverty if one can play to the elite level and make it to Europe or wealthier leagues where the income earned in soccer, compared to that of Ghana, is a fortune (Diehl et al., 2009). The poverty levels in Ghana and the lack of infrastructure that presents a lack of economic opportunities for the local players is a motivating factor that makes them look beyond the borders of Ghana for their future (Darby & Solberg, 2010).

Ghana’s national team, the Black Stars, represents one of the most prominent national teams on the African continent (Soccer, 1999). The Black Stars has won the African Cup of Nations (ACN) on four occasions and has been a finalist a couple of times. In the past two World Cup tournaments, the Black Stars has been the only African team to have reached the quarter final stage of the tournament in 2006 and 2010. The presence of African players plying their trades abroad and playing for their national teams is also a factor that motivates players from the local league to want to migrate to Europe (Poli, 2006a). For most of these, Poli identified that only 19.1 % of African national team players at the 2006 World Cup played for clubs in their
home countries. Similarly, during the last World Cup in 2010, the Black Stars has only three
players who played in the Ghana Premier league (World Cup, 2010). These were substitute
defender Lee Addy, who currently plays in Serbia and Montenegro and substitute goalkeepers
Daniel Adjei and Stephen Ahoelu, who play for Liberty Professionals Football Club and Kpando
Hearts of Lions Football Club respectively in the Ghana Premier League (World Cup, 2010). For
most of the local players the best way to get a call up to the national team, is to be playing off the
shores of Ghana. This is due to the nature of the call up into the national team, which reflects an
inclination towards foreign based professionals.

This development points to the dependent development strand of Gunder’s (1974)
dependency theory. Gunder suggested that third world development is dependent on the first
world. In terms of football migration, this is to say that, the control of finances and the ability to
make decisions on the future direction of football in Africa lies with how well African players
are doing in Europe (Darby, 2000a) and the big leagues for that matter. This gives credence to
how dependent the development of the game in Africa is on the pace of the big leagues in Europe
(Bale & Maguire, 1994).

As stated by Darby (2000a), Africa’s inability to break away from its dependent
relationship with FIFA established European constituents is undermined by the economic and
institutional challenges that are present within the African game. This lack of financial clout in
the African game serves as its biggest challenge in the development of African soccer. Darby
further posited that Africa’s lack of economic strength has a bearing on its lack of political
strength within FIFA’s football corridors. Therefore, leagues like Ghana’s lack the financial
strength to be able to retain their players in order to be developing soccer. In a recent ranking of
football leagues in Africa, the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (Sports
Homepage, 2010a) ranked the Ghana Premier League 11th. Egypt and Tunisia were ranked first and second respectively (Sports Homepage, 2010a). For a country that had the highest ranking in the 2010 FIFA/Coca Cola rankings (Black Stars Stay Top, 2011) it is in sharp contrast to realize how the Ghana Premier League is ranked in Africa. Consequently, Kapur and McHale (2005) stated that local leagues in Africa lack the shine they deserve in the absence of the stars that could have been available to the league.

**Effects on the Premier League**

The constant departure of local stars from the Ghana Premier League amounts to the deskilling of the local sport system as posited by Maguire and Pearton (2000). Players that have been developed through the time and scant resources of the local league leave when they peak (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Stakeholders in the Ghana Premier league have had cause to indicate the effects of migration on the local league with regards to a variety of issues.

In a recent article, a chief executive of Hearts of Lions, one of the Premier League clubs in Ghana, Desmond Frempong Manso rued the mass exodus of key strikers from the Premier League. He lamented the absence of three strikers of the club and said it was going to affect their performance in the league (Sports Homepage, 2010b). This development deprives the league of its first choice players to the wealthier leagues and thus leaves the Premier league to struggle to gain the appeal that it possessed with the presence of the departed stars (e.g., Darby & Solberg, 2010; Kapur & McHale, 2005; Poli, 2006b; Thibault, 2009). This is to say that the loss of talent from the league goes a far way to undermine the development of the local league and to reduce the standard (Kapur & McHale, 2005). The exodus of players from the local leagues was found to deskill the domestic game in Ghana as identified by Darby (2008).
As revealed by a stakeholders’ meeting report on the Ghana Premier League in 2009, the local league suffered a setback due to the lack of spectators at the games, which also led to the clubs and administrators losing a great deal of gate proceeds (Stakeholders Meet, 2009). Gerrard (2002) indicated that the financial viability of local clubs is reduced when players migrate to bigger leagues that can afford higher wages. Kapur and McHale (2005) revealed that the outflow of talents from local leagues resulted in reduced standards, which had an adverse effect on attendance and gate receipts thereof. Since most Ghanaian clubs depend on gate proceeds as a major source of income for club management, the absence or reduction in gate proceeds deepens the financial woes of domestic clubs (Gerrard, 2002).

The lack of media focus had been identified as a challenge for the local league due to player exodus from the local league (Poli, 2006b). Due to local media coverage and focus on the European leagues, local fans lose interest in the local league and focus their attention on the exploits of migrated local players. The GFA president, Kwesi Nyantakyi, had admonished the media in a 2009 stakeholders’ meeting to make it a priority to patronize the domestic league since the notable European leagues such as the Spanish “La Liga”, English Premiership and Italian “Serie A” were hyped in Ghana (Stakeholders Meet, 2009). The lack of fan interest in the local league and the resultant loss of gate proceeds by clubs in the Ghana Premier League have also been cited by stakeholders as a bane to the development of the league. Sponsorship for the Premier League has been a challenging issue for the league until the recent involvement of Globacom as title sponsors (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Media focus on local players plying their trade abroad was identified as a way of creating an intermediary for local fans in their support for European teams (Poli, 2006b). This development was found by Darby and Solberg (2010) to create a talent population in the local league that is bound to migrate. Poli (2006a) also posited
that local players who migrate and do not get the success that they dream of refuse to return home due to the expectations that family and relations have of them. Poli identified this development as one that leaves migrant players stranded and lurking in Europe even with no contract, when such players could return and be of good use to the local leagues.

As stated by Poli (2006b), players from West Africa are the leading suppliers of football talent from Africa to Europe. The Ghana Premier League has been plagued with the exodus of players from the 1990’s until now (Darby & Solberg, 2010). For players in Ghana, making it to the elite level of the local Premier League is a stepping stone to leaving for wealthier leagues in Europe (Diehl et al., 2009). The players from the Premier League see the opportunity to migrate as a means to escape the lack of financial opportunity and infrastructure in the local league (Darby & Solberg, 2010). Some players in Ghana migrate to places such as Egypt, South Africa, Tunisia, Qatar and Libya with the hope of using these countries as a stepping stone to get contracts in Europe (Poli, 2006b). The Ghana Premier League loses players to wealthier leagues in Europe and all around the globe (Darby, 2007b).

Therefore, considering the various challenges that the Ghana Premier League faces with regards to the migration of players, this study investigates the effects that the exodus of players has on the Ghana Premier League from a stakeholder’s perspective and as a model, explores the initiatives that can be undertaken to address these adverse effects.

METHOD

The study is exploratory in nature since it examines the perceptions of stakeholders on the adverse effects of player migration on the sport system in developing countries and on initiatives that could be undertaken to reduce the effects of elite player exodus
on the GPL. Therefore, the research employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005) to solicit and understand the perceptions of major stakeholders.

**Participants**

The population of interest for this research included sports administrators and major stakeholders who were or are involved in the organization of the Ghana Premier League and key informants (Brown & Potts, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005) who have in-depth knowledge of the players’ migration phenomena.

Respondents to the study were identified using purposive sampling (Gratton & Jones, 2004), and were included based on their knowledge and experience in running of the Ghana Premier League and clubs involved in the league. After initial calls to club administrators and media personnel in Ghana, participants who met the criteria were identified and selected as respondents for this study (Li, Pitts & Quarterman, 2008). After identifying the respondents, they were all contacted by phone and the researcher introduced himself and provided a brief description of the study. The email contacts of the respondents were then taken to allow a formal correspondence to be sent to them as well as to invite them (See Appendix A, B and C for telephone transcript, copy of first email going out and letter of information).

Thirteen key persons agreed to participate in the study: three league administrators, four club administrators, two sponsors (one previous and one current), two fan representatives of the two biggest clubs in the Ghana Premier League, and two media persons. These participants were earmarked to be major stakeholders because they are involved in the running of the clubs and the league in question and also have vast knowledge of the league and its dynamics (Long, 2007).
An overview of the participants for this study, the respective positions they occupy in the Ghana Premier League and their allocated abbreviations are provided in table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of study sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Stakeholder to Ghana Premier League (GPL)</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Length of affiliation to the GPL (At Least)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>League Administrator (LA1)*</td>
<td>Deputy General Secretary</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League Administrator (LA2)*</td>
<td>Deputy General Secretary</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League Administrator (LA3)*</td>
<td>Board Chairman</td>
<td>16 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Administrator (CA1)*</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Administrator (CA2)*</td>
<td>Administrative Manager</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Administrator (CA3)*</td>
<td>Football Association and International Relations Manager</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Administrator (CA4)*</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan Representative (FR1)*</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan Representative (FR2)*</td>
<td>Public Relations Officer</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Media Representative (MR1)*</td>
<td>Sports Analyst and writer</td>
<td>16 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA Media Representative/League Administrator (MR2)*</td>
<td>Executive Board Member and Spokesperson</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Sponsor (SP1)*</td>
<td>Sponsorship and Events Manager</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Sponsor (SP2)*</td>
<td>Sponsorship and Relationships Manager</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * The respondents will be identified by these abbreviations in the results section.
**League administrators.**

These three officials have been involved in the running of the Ghana Premier League for at least the last five years and are knowledgeable in the migration of players from the Premier League. Their perceptions were vital to this study since the GFA is the umbrella under which the League is organized and run.

**Club administrators.**

The four Premier League club administrators were chosen from four different clubs based on the fact that among the current Ghana Premier League clubs, the respective clubs of these administrators have lost the most players to leagues in Europe since the early 1990s till date (Poli, 2006b; Darby, 2007a; 2007b; Ghanaian players abroad by country, 2011). A cursory look at players that have left the Ghana Premier League since the early 1990s to ply their trade abroad reveals that Kumasi Asante Kotoko has lost an estimated amount of 42 players, followed by Hearts of Oak who have 36 players. Liberty Professionals have lost 32 players and Kpando Hearts of Lions have lost 21 players (Poli, 2006b; Darby, 2007a; 2007b; Ghanaian players abroad by country, 2011) (see Table 2 for tabulated number of foreign based Ghanaian players from these four Ghana Premier League Clubs).

However, due to the fact that efforts to get an appointment with an executive of the Kpando Hearts of Lions Football Club proved futile, the researcher replaced the respondent with the Chief Executive of Wa All Stars Football Club. This Club administrator has been affiliated to the Ghana Premier League since 1993 when it metamorphosed into a professional league. Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak are the two most glamorous clubs, have been
around for a very long time, and have been in the elite Premier league over decades (Soccer, 1999).

Table 3: Ghanaian players abroad since the 1990’s and their former local club affiliation (tabulated from Ghanaian Players Abroad by Country, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GHANA PREMIER LEAGUE CLUB</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PLAYERS IN EUROPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kumasi Asante Kotoko</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra Hearts of Oak</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Professionals</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearts of Lions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sponsors.

It was the original intention to conduct interviews with the previous title sponsors of the GPL but due to unavailability of an official, a previous sponsor of a league club was identified as a replacement participant. In addition, a representative of one current corporate sponsor of the league participated in the study. Both respondents provided vital information from a sponsor’s perspective on the effects of player migration on corporate decisions to sponsor the Ghana Premier League and their suggested initiatives. It should be noted that the interview with the
current official sponsor was incomplete after multiple attempts to get him to finish the final question on the interview script yielded no response after two months of calling.

**Media stakeholders.**

Two experienced media personnel: one from the private media, and the other one from the GFA, were also interviewed to determine what effects the migration of players from the local league has had on the league from a media perspective. These media personnel helped to examine whether the absence of stars from the Ghana Premier League shifts the focus of the media to the wealthier leagues and what in their opinion can be done to mitigate the effects even in the face of migration.

**Fan representatives.**

Interviews with two representatives from the Premier League’s club supporters’ front was to help to examine how fans’ interest and attendance have been affected over the years by the consistent loss of local stars from the league to wealthier leagues in Europe and around the globe. These two representatives were selected due to the fact that they represent the two clubs that command the largest fan base in the Ghana Premier League (Darby, 2007a).

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow respondents to provide detailed answers and allow for follow-up questions (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Seidman, 2006) that go beyond predetermined questions (Berg, 1998). The above literature review was used as the basis for the interview guide to investigate the perception of stakeholders on the effects of migration.
on sports systems and possible solutions. The questions were structured around three main themes:

1. **What are the factors that motivate or influence players to migrate from the Ghana Premier League?**

2. **In what way does player migration affect the development or underdevelopment of the Ghana Premier League from a stakeholders’ perspective?** Probes pertained to the impact on: (a) domestic talent; (b) development of the domestic league; (c) media coverage; (d) challenges for clubs; and, (e) national team assignments.

3. **How can player migration be controlled and what are the initiatives that can be undertaken to have a positive impact on the Ghana Premier League despite migration?**

A sample of the interview guide is available in Appendix D.

**Collection of Data**

Telephone interviews were conducted due to the geographical location of the respondents and the researcher (Andrews, Mason & Silk, 2005). A letter of consent for participation (see Appendix E) was sent prior to the interviews. These interviews were conducted by the researcher from the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada with the use of special recorder over Skype telephone calls to the respondents in Ghana. Except for one respondent who was difficult to get an appointment with and was later replaced with a substitute club manager, none of the respondents declined the request for participation and audio recording (see Appendix F for Audio Consent form). The interviews were conducted between the months of May 2011 and September 2011. Participants were allowed to choose times and venues that were convenient for
them in order to ensure honest responses from them (Seidman, 2006). The interviews lasted between twenty eight and sixty three minutes.

**Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed verbatim to allow the researcher to gather the intended meanings of all the interview responses from participants as stated by Gratton & Jones (2004). The thirteen transcribed interviews ranged from six pages to thirteen pages for a total number of 95 pages (single spaced scripts). The data analysis process for this study was largely inductive. The researcher allowed categories, themes and patterns to emerge from the data gathered, rather than defining them prior to data analysis (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Once the interviews were transcribed, an initial preview of the data was performed by reading through them on five occasions. This helped the researcher to become very familiar with the transcripts and recurrent and emerging themes were identified.

Through open coding the data collected was condensed into categories and major themes that emerged were assigned initial codes or labels (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Once open coding was complete, axial coding was employed. In this phase of analysis, further read-through of the data was performed, with the intention of reviewing and examining initial themes or codes identified during the open coding analysis stage. The emphasis here was to establish the linkages between themes and reinforcing the connection between the evidence and the themes that have already been identified (Amis 2005; Gratton & Jones, 2004). This involved interpreting the meaning underlying the categories that were established during the open-coding process. Lastly, selective coding was undertaken. Briefly, selective coding involved scanning the data and established codes to identify cases that illustrated themes or explained the concepts of the migration phenomena.
The researcher manually performed some analysis using the three methods of coding identified in the section above whilst using the Nvivo- Qualitative Analysis Software (NVivo 8, 2008) to help organize the determined codes. The researcher also looked for themes that were contradictory as well as confirmatory (Amis 2005; Gratton & Jones, 2004). All thirteen interviews were analyzed even though one respondent could not complete his interview due to technical problems in telephone connection and futile attempts to get another appointment with the respondent. However the recognition that some answers to the final question was present in his previous responses necessitated that the interview be analyzed. The coding scheme used in the analysis is made available in Appendix G.

The framework for the analysis was developed from the questionnaire based on the literature review. Overall, three main themes were used as the framework for the analysis of this study. These themes were initially established as: (a) factors of migration; (b) effects of migration; and, (c) initiatives. Using Weed’s (2003) method for working with, and presenting qualitative data, these main themes were followed by sub themes, where applicable and used as the basis for results analysis and discussion. Summaries of the interview responses from stakeholders were indexed as tables in appendices H to N and used as the basis for reporting the findings of this study. The quotes that best illustrate the different themes are presented in the results section.

**Validity, Trustworthiness and Reliability**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the research, triangulation was employed with data sources by interviewing different informants (Gratton & Jones, 2004). An example is the use of two media personnel with one selected from the Football Association and the other selected from the private media. Similarly, representatives from both the previous and
current official sponsors of the Ghana Premier League as participants to the study was also another form of triangulation employed by the researcher. Data collected from particular respondents was used to complement data collected from other similar participants (Gratton & Jones, 2004). To determine that the codes for the analysis were reliable, two separate colleagues examined the code structure after the analysis. If there were any differences in the separate analyses, further discussions were held to resolve them.

RESULTS

Reasons for Migration

The overall perceptions of stakeholders about migration in Ghana as a country and particularly the impact it has on the Ghana Premier league was sought in order to place the responses of stakeholders in perspective. Overall, financial reasons emerged as a dominant factor which influences the migration of elite players from the Ghana Premier League. All thirteen interviewees indicated that the prime reason why players migrate from the GPL is to make more money as compared to what they make from the local league in Ghana. However, non-monetary factors were also mentioned.

Context of Ghana as a developing country: A dominant factor for player migration.

Ghana as a developing country faces many economic and infrastructural challenges. The country has an overall low formal education rate and a low Gross Domestic Product based on the size of the economy (see comments 1, 2 and 3, Appendix H). There are not many multinational companies apart from a few telecommunication companies that help to boost the country’s economy as identified by stakeholders (see comment 1, Appendix H). The majority of people in the country come from working class and poor income backgrounds; this also illustrates the weak economy. For those who have jobs, the economy of the country does not promise or assure
the larger population with enviable incomes and therefore individuals from all spheres of life look for opportunities in other countries to seek greener pastures (see comments 1-4, Appendix H). Stakeholders indicated that the size of Ghana’s economy does not allow for companies to actively get involved in sponsoring sport in the country and this in turn has an effect on the ability for clubs to be able to pay players commensurate wages (this will be further elaborated in latter sections below). Therefore, to the average Ghanaian and player for that matter, the chance to migrate to ply one’s trade is seen as an opportunity to escape the inherent hardships and challenges of the local economy both for the individual and family.

**Players’ low socio economic status.**

Based on the above factors inherent in the context of Ghana as mentioned above, participants perceived that the majority of Ghanaian players have not attained a higher level of formal education and because they lack formal training in a trade to help them compete for jobs in a challenging economy, they look for opportunities in football to also come out of the poverty and economic hardships (see comments 3, 4 and 7, Appendix H). Migration from the league to a wealthier league offers these players the opportunity to earn higher wages than they would earn if they are to remain in Ghana and play for a local club. Thus Ghanaian players actively look for the least opportunity to migrate to leagues in Europe and other wealthier leagues to play their football and take advantage of the favourable returns on their football talents (see comments 3 and 4, Appendix H). Respondents indicated that since football was the window of opportunity for these players, given their socioeconomic status, they try to make the best out of it by migrating to wealthier leagues.
Democracy.

As a democratic country, the laws of Ghana allow its citizenry freedom of capital, labor and movement and therefore individuals are free to sell their labor where they deem appropriate and most rewarding. Stakeholders indicated this constitutional rights also encourages players as well as other spheres’ skilled labors to look for a better opportunity to gain financial rewards away from the shores of Ghana (comments 5 and 6, Appendix H are indicative of such perceptions by stakeholders). A club administrator had this to say:

Well look at football now as an occupation… I am sure this has changed a lot of the domestic leagues……there is freedom of movement and of course if the lawyers, the doctors can move away from the country to seek greener pastures, the players also have the same opportunity. So the players are moving out of the country because they want greener pastures (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 2011)

Passion for football and players regarded as heroes.

Additionally stakeholders indicated that Ghana is a football nation and there is much passion for football, which makes the players regarded as heroes within the society as a whole. This makes players want to migrate in order to be able to meet the fame and status accorded them by the society (see comment 7, Appendix H). Respondents perceived that players migrate in order to be able to reap the economic benefits from wealthier leagues and be able to live luxurious lives that befit the hero and fame status accorded them as players (see comment 7, Appendix H).
Monetary factors impacting player’s migration.

Stakeholders identified that due to the nature of Ghana’s economy, the major factor for players’ migration from the local league is monetary and this can be seen primarily from the players’ desire to earn higher wages and also from the clubs’ attempt to generate the needed funds to run their activities.

Due to the recognition that Ghana as a developing country has a weak economy, there are not a lot of opportunities for corporate support in sports by way of sponsorships. Competition for sponsorship is limited between a few Telecommunication companies and this does not make it easy for all sixteen clubs to acquire the needed sponsorship, which is essential to sustain the players. For instance the two most successful clubs, Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak, are sponsored by the same telecommunication company MTN (FR1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). This consequently affects players’ salary. No club in Ghana pays its players a salary of more than $1000 because most of the clubs have no sound financial footing as compared to their counterparts in Europe (see comments 10, Appendix H). There are not many corporate entities able to provide the required sponsorship for football. This development does not allow clubs to get a lot of sponsorship from the very few corporate entities. The wages of players in the Ghana Premier League is an insignificant fraction of what they stand to get paid as wages if they should get the chance to go play for clubs in Europe. As indicated by one stakeholder, in the 2010/2011 season, the amount earned from the official sponsors of the league by each team was $100,000. This amount is less than what Michael Essien makes in a week as a player in the English Premier League (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). This is an indication of how the general economy affects the Ghana Premier League and why players are always looking forward to migrating. Respondents stated that clubs in the
Ghana Premier League are not paying salaries up to that which players receive in Europe so players in the local league leave as soon as they realize any opportunity for a higher salary regardless of the destination. Against the backdrop of the poor nature of the country, players from the Premier League who look to make greater financial gain in their football career are constantly seeking a chance to migrate and make greater financial gains from their football career. Evidence from the interviews clearly indicate that players, like workers, make rational decisions to ply their trade where they will receive higher income as compared to the income they will get in their countries of origin (see comment 8 and 9, Appendix H). For players in the Ghana Premier League the ambition is to only play briefly in the local league and then seize every possible opportunity to play in Europe or other wealthier leagues that offer a better remuneration (see comments 8, 9 and 10, Appendix H). The following comment by a league administrator articulates a stakeholder’s perception of economic reasons being the underlying factor for players’ migration from the Ghana Premier League:

Now when it comes to that, economy you know comes into play. If we have sponsors of the league and the clubs also have enough money to pay the players well, but these things are not there…The wages that are paid to them are nothing to write home about but that is what the clubs can … pay because if we have enough sponsors, the clubs will have enough money and pay the players well for them to stay…(LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011)

**Returns on investment (ROI) for local clubs: an underlying push factor for player migration.**

The interviews with the stakeholders also revealed another reason to influence the migration of players, which is the fact that club owners need the revenue that accrues from the
sale of the players to run their clubs (see comments 11-15, Appendix I). Even though this is not a primary factor, it is an underlying factor which also serves as a positive effect on the local league for clubs. These monies that accrue from the sale of players when managed well helps to finance the running of the clubs. The aspect of its benefit will be touched on in the section on the impact of migration on the league later in this paper. Some club owners and financiers consciously seek out foreign clubs to get some players to migrate. The proceeds from such transactions in the event of these players landing a contract are mostly channelled into the running of the clubs. Some club managers also see it as an opportunity to get returns on their investment (ROI) into the development of players. In one of the interviews, a league administrator gave this response,

And sometimes as a team owner, having spent on somebody [player] for years you want to have profit. And so sometimes the team owners themselves look for opportunities abroad for the players to migrate. So that at least they can get some benefit from the training that they have invested in the supposed would be migrating player (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011)

This and other comments (see comment 15, Appendix I) emphasize the fact that it is not just players who are bent on migrating for economic gains but club owners and administrators also play a role in the migration of players from the Ghana Premier League. So in as much as players want to migrate for the benefit of a better salary, club owners and financiers also play an active role in getting players to foreign clubs for their own benefits. For these club administrators the migration of their star players serves as an opportunity to cash in on their enticement fees and use that to run the business of the club (see comments 12-14, Appendix I). This is regardless of whether the player has been with the local club for just a short time in the season. Seven respondents confirmed that as part of a means to generate revenue for the running of their clubs
and also making some ROI, some Premier League clubs are in the business of making sure their star players get foreign contracts and migrate. Significantly, as stated by one respondent “But the overriding principle is that most of these league clubs have become selling” (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011).

**Non-monetary factors impacting player’s migration.**

Responds from interviewees revealed that some of the factors that impacted player migration in the Ghana Premier League were not only economically driven. Six non-monetary factors influencing the exodus of players were identified from various responses by stakeholders. These were identified as national team opportunity, skill development, lack of infrastructure, lack of superior coaching, lack of exposure and experience, and negative management practices.

**National team opportunity.**

From the perspective of stakeholders, the opportunity to play for the national team is a factor which motivates players to migrate from the Ghana Premier League to other leagues in Europe and other parts of the world. Players in the local league actively look for the opportunity to migrate and to ply their career away from home in order to increase their chances of earning a call up to any of Ghana’s national teams. This is illustrated in the comments (see comments 16 and 17, Appendix J) made by stakeholders to the effect that in order for players to be called to play on any of the national teams, they have to be playing in Europe or outside Ghana. Specifically to Ghana, the Black Stars squad reveals a major representation of players who ply their trade with foreign clubs mostly in Europe. The interviewees revealed that national team coaches continually select players who play their club football in Europe rather than those from the local league. Due to this trend, there is a general perception that the best players who are
qualified for the national team spots are those who play outside the country. To explain this perceived factor of national team opportunity, this is what one league administrator had to say:

Yes, from the Ghana Premier League … you want to be called to the Black stars…

Because if you are here, people don’t think that you are that good but … if you travel outside, you will be called. And the coaches make this thing very clear. They think if you are playing outside there,… under a very good coach [and in] very different conditions, then you come with some airs and with some … attitude which can make you play for the nation, so people are compelled to go (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

This statement confirms an inclination towards the selection of players who play for clubs outside the Ghana Premier League and therefore confirms the perception that players see the need to migrate if they want to have a call up to play with any of the national teams of Ghana.

Skill development.

The desire of players to develop their skills further was identified as a factor which also influences the migration of players from the Ghana Premier league. Some respondents perceived that this was due to factors such as a lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of superior local coaching and lack of competitiveness in the local league. Examples of responses were based on perceptions that their players get access to more developed and advanced training facilities when they migrate to the wealthier leagues and this helps them improve on their skills and advance their career (see comments 18 and 19, Appendix J). Respondents perceived that since clubs in the Ghana Premier League lack adequate advanced training facilities and skilled coaching staff which are necessary for the development of players talents, sometimes players are compelled to
migrate because they want to improve on their quality and become attractive for the football market.

**Lack of infrastructure**

Nine respondents identified lack of infrastructure as the reason why players will want to leave the Premiere league. Ghana as a country cannot boast of more than 7 stadia of international standard and most of the clubs barely have their own training pitches or fields. According to some stakeholders, this lack of infrastructure forms part of the non-monetary reasons why players migrate (see comments 20 and 21, Appendix J) from the Ghana premier league into other wealthier leagues. The following is what a fan representative had to say about the perceived lack of infrastructure.

Seriously, the whole country has about 6 or 7 good stadia…which is not good for a country which has enough talents. We can talk of… the Baba Yara stadium at um Kumasi, Ohene Djan at Accra, we have one at Tamale, one at Sekondi, and Ashgold also has a nice facility at Obuasi. Apart from these places, the other venues….I call them parks but others… call these places stadiums, and I don’t think they deserve to be called stadiums. There are not enough facilities in this country. As for the talent, they are here but if you compare these facilities to those of Europe and other places… the players will tell you; even when they get there, things… are more different from what we have in this country. So, I believe that infrastructure is also one thing that compels these players to migrate from the country (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011)

This statement by one of the respondents confirms the lack of adequate infrastructure within the Ghana Premier League. Ghana as a country can boast of numerous soccer talents but
the country cannot equally boast of numerous infrastructures for the game of football. Ghana can only boast of six stadiums that meet international standards (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011) and two of these stadiums are located in the Ashanti Region whilst four of these stadiums are owned by the state. Apart from Ashanti Gold Football Club, none of the Premier league clubs can boast of a stadium that meets international standards and this, for stakeholders, needs to be improved.

**Lack of superior coaching.**

Respondents also indicated the lack of available superior coaching in the local clubs as another reason why players migrate from the Ghana Premier League. Stakeholders revealed a perception that foreign and European coaches for that matter are expertly trained and possess superior technical ability and expertise to impart onto players (see comment 22, Appendix J). This is what one league administrator had to say in this regard;

….they think that if you [player] have a foreign coach coaching you out there, you will learn a lot more better than when you are here because some of our coaches here are not able to go on refresher courses to update their knowledge…. and for that reason ….you will not acquire certain skills but,…they think if you are able to go outside there and you are taught by a coach who is competent, then of course you will certainly broaden your knowledge about the game. That is a fact. (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

This underscores the perceptions of some stakeholders on the desire by local players to migrate in a bid to have access to superior coaching. The interviews revealed that respondents perceive European coaches to have superior coaching skills and techniques. Local players
therefore see their migration as a means to have access to such superior coaching to help them in their personal development as players

**Exposure and experience.**

In the opinion of some respondents players migrate sometimes not only because of economic reasons but sometimes they do so because they can also get the needed experience and exposure from other leagues which are more competitive and well known than the local league (See comment 23, appendix J). Some stakeholders perceived that some players migrate in order to broaden their horizon and also try to match up their skills and ability against other players in the wealthier leagues after they have had enough of the local league experience (See comment 24, Appendix J). A club administrator who has been affiliated with the GPL for the past 19 years had this to say;

Yes …and then broaden their horizon. You see, when you have played in this country for a long time you might get bored and think that well, I might as well travel outside and look around and see …with other top players in Europe or let’s say in the Americas …therefore they will want to go and share their experience somewhere else and also learn more and come back home…You have some players leaving no matter what….some players might …. want to go out, even if their salaries and conditions of service are as good as those in Europe and in other countries; they will still want to leave because they think ….they are bored, they just want to take a look around, share experience somewhere… (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011)

It is however important to note that the ambition of some players to play at the highest level and increase their experience and adventure by playing away from home and in particular
destinations also aligns with their ambition to gain the respect that society accords migrant players as discussed in earlier section (see comment 7, Appendix H).

Negative management practice.

Another reason why players migrate from the local league in Ghana was identified by stakeholders as the lack of professionalism on the part of some club managers and league administration. Some respondents perceived the lack of adequate business practices on behalf of club managers which consequently deprive them of enough revenue to be able to run their clubs effectively and make them profitable (see comment 25, Appendix J). Participants identified that some clubs do not appoint people with the right professional qualifications and technical expertise. As indicated by the interviewees in comments of perceived lack of professionalism, (see Comment 26, Appendix J) clubs in the Ghana Premier league have a lot of structural challenges, which influences the decision of players to migrate.

Effects of Migration

All thirteen respondents indicated a perception of an overall negative effect of migration on the Ghana Premier League. Four respondents indicated both negative and positive perceptions of migration on the Ghana football league as a whole. Examples of these perceptions are evident in the responses as captured in the interviews (see Comments in Appendixes K and L). These perceptions reveal stakeholders’ views of the impacts of the migration phenomenon on the Ghana Premier League.
Positive effects of player exodus.

Even though a majority of stakeholders indicated a negative impact of migration on the Ghana premier league, they also perceived some positive impacts varying from the club level, national team and other areas of the economy and society.

Club.

Stakeholders indicated a perception that when players migrate sometimes it impacts positively on the local club by way of the financial returns they make from selling the star players (see comments 13 and 15 in Appendix I) and also the positive impact that some migrated players have on the local clubs.

Returns on Investment (ROI).

As indicated above, the returns on investments (ROI) for clubs have been discussed as an underlying push factor of migration in the previous section (see Appendix I). It was indicated that clubs get some revenue when they sell their players to the European clubs and sometimes when those few funds are handled well, it could help ease the financial burdens of the clubs (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011).

Sport development.

Another benefit indicated as an impact of migration on league clubs was identified by stakeholders as sports development. Some respondents indicated that sometimes when players migrate they return as coaches and offer their expertise to their various local clubs who apply for their services (see comments 27, Appendix K).

Other migrant players also return and invest their wealth into other areas of the football infrastructure to help discover new and younger talents who are able to step in the shoes when
other players migrate from the league. An example is given of Marseille Desailly, a retired Ghanaian player who played his club soccer with Chelsea Football Club in England and also naturalized to play for the French National team. He currently has invested money into a football complex to help train young football talents in Ghana (see comment 28, Appendix K). Others also invest into clubs and that also helps improve the local football economy (See comment 29, Appendix K). Other migrated players also serve as role models to younger players who aspire to be like them. As one of the respondents stated, “….but that notwithstanding, it also encourages the young ones to take over from the skilful ones and through that they become skilful and the cycle continues” (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011). Others also invest directly into football clubs and thereby help the general football economy and clubs to have younger talents that could serve as sources of talent discovery (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011).

*National team improvement.*

National team improvement was identified as another positive impact that player migration from the local league is having on the league. The Ghana national team, the Black Stars, has gained a very high profiling and respect in recent times due to their international performance. All the stakeholders interviewed indicated a perception that the Ghana National team(s) are impacted positively due to the fact that most players that are invited to play for the national teams play their club soccer overseas. Respondents posited that migrated players get access to better coaching, competition and infrastructure; they are better developed when they return to play for the national team(s). Because these migrated players who ply their trade usually in Europe feature in better leagues they acquire some skills and mental toughness they might not gain in the local league. Thus the national teams benefit from the services of these migrated players when they return to play for the national teams and perform very well (see
comments 31 and 32, Appendix, K). The following statement by a media representative underscores the stakeholder’s perception of a positive impact of migration on the Ghana national teams:

… with the senior national team, there is an interesting paradox because it turns out that most of the players who go out get back a better or higher quality in terms of the things that are added on to them when they migrate … you look at let’s say the Black Stars you would obviously see that migration has also benefited the national team because most of these players who come back to play for the team are players of a higher quality than when they left the shores of the country (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011)

Other areas of the economy and society.

Other respondents indicated that outside football, the national economy is also positively impacted. Migrated players earn commensurate wages from their respective clubs which helps them to live improved individual lives and also make them able to support their families and friends by way of remittances to Ghana. This, according to the responses from stakeholders, helps to improve other areas of the general economy and society (see comments 33 and 34, Appendix K). One of the club administrators indicated how the general economy is impacted by the migrated players when he stated that “migrated players invest in businesses back home which also contributes to national economy” (CA2, personal communication, June 26, 2011).

Negative effects of player exodus.

From the perspective of the respondents, player migration from the Premier League adversely impacts the Ghana Premier league. Much as stakeholders acknowledged some positive effects of migration on the local league, it was revealed from interviews that negative effects of migration on the Ghana Premier League far outweigh the positive effects.
Unfair trade.

All thirteen respondents perceived that in the absence of the migrated players who are mostly the best players on the local scene, the league is bereft of quality talents. This lack of quality players makes it difficult for the league to generate the kind of excitement it deserves. This development makes it impossible for the Ghana Premier league to have the services of the very players that have been developed by the scant resources of the league clubs. Examples of stakeholder’s responses (see comment 35 and 36, Appendix L) show how the inadequate compensation to clubs does not allow for league clubs to have adequate funds to pay existing players to stay and also help to develop the league. Stakeholders perceived a lack of stars in the Ghana Premier league due to unfair trade. The clubs in the Premier League lose players to clubs from wealthier leagues without receiving much return and this leaves the clubs without their star players and also without enough money to get adequate replacement. The administrative manager of Accra Hearts of Oak had this to say:

Look at the situation where European players demand huge sums of transfer fees before they move around, we are aware of the figures that are involved when players like Cristiano Ronaldo or Kaka are being transferred…. What it means is that European clubs equally need to fish elsewhere for better talents but for cheaper costs… and you know in Ghana the talents abound so we have the situation where the European clubs come and leverage that to acquire good talent for cheaper prices…. They [European clubs] come out here and whereas they will buy Kaka or Ronaldo for all the millions of dollars, they might get a Ghanaian player for $100,000, $200,000, $300,000. Now the player in the first place appears to want to go or appears to be happy because the enticement fee appears good to him. However the player might have received peanuts [less money] as a
talented African player. I don’t want to quote the costs of Steven Appiah from Accra Hearts of Oak to Udinese Club and from Udinese to Parma but if we evaluate the situation we do realize that Accra Hearts of Oak got very little whiles they were transferring Steven Appiah to Udinese compared to how much Udinese got when they sold him to Parma. The same applies to a like Michael Essien from Liberty professionals to Olympic Lyon and from Olympic Lyon to Chelsea (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011)

This lack of adequate compensation by wealthier European clubs therefore does not allow for adequate financial capacity for the clubs. Thus the clubs in the Ghana Premier League do not have the financial capabilities to offer commensurate wages to players in order to retain them.

**Lack of quality players and deskilling.**

Participants identified that due to the fact that European clubs are always ready to offer enticing fees to players and players are eager to leave, the local league is left without quality players, which results in the deskilling of the league (see comments 37-40, Appendix L).

Some stakeholders stated that as much as there are monetary benefits for the Premier league clubs when they sell their players to the wealthier leagues, these financial benefits are short term and the long term effect is that the Premier League loses its top and quality players. One respondent had this to say in this regard:

… The quality players are all gone….when a player emerges, the next six months or one year, the player leaves. So this has affected the league seriously. We no longer have the quality players that we used to have in the league in the early 80s and the 90s. Any quality that emerges at any point in time leaves the country. So if I am supporter and I am
to go to a particular stadium tomorrow, who am I going to watch? …..Seriously we
don’t have the quality in the league any longer (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011)

The sale of their star players by clubs even though this might bring some income in the
short-term to the clubs ends up depriving them of their top players who are crowd pullers. “So
the negative effect is that even though we think we are making money selling these players, we
actually lose more money because people don’t turn up at the stadium” (SR2, personal
communication, August 18, 2011).

Lack of spectatorship.

Stakeholders perceived a lack of spectatorship as another effect of player exodus on the
local league in Ghana. This lack of spectatorship in the view of stakeholders is due to the fact
that there are no stars in the league to generate the kind of interest desired by spectators. This
lack of interest in the local league puts it at a disadvantageous position because clubs are no
longer able to generate the needed funds from gate proceeds (see comments 41-44, Appendix L).
The following statement by a previous sponsor signifies the perceptions of stakeholders on the
lack of spectatorship due to the absence of quality players in the league.

Obviously the worrying trend is that, if you visit any of our stadiums, you find out that
attracting fans to the games is a problem. Now because we have a chunk of our best
players playing outside, if you visit the stadia the quality of play is horrible so people do
not feel they are getting value for their money so what happening is that the crowd at the
stadia keeps on dwindling…. and it becomes very difficult for a professional
businessman to invest into soccer because at the end of the day you need the fans to be
able to get the revenue for you to be able to develop the players and football. If they don’t turn up at the stadia, you don’t make money… So for me the key thing is the lack of fans… Now if they [players] do not stay ….obviously the fans will make their case by not turning up for football games. So it stalls the development especially for crowd participation. The crowds keep reducing (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011)

This statement confirms stakeholders’ perception of low patronage for Premier league games, which also results in low revenues for clubs since their major source of revenue for the clubs is from the gate proceeds.

*Diversion of attention towards European Leagues.*

From the interviews, it was evident that respondents perceived that exodus of players from the Premier League has shifted the focus of fans and media alike to the wealthier and more competitive European leagues. These are examples of stakeholders’ responses (see comments 45-49, Appendix L) with regard to the diverted attention of local fans on to foreign leagues. This is because they perceive that the European leagues have a representation of quality stars who these local spectators will want to watch. Therefore local fans tend to divert their attention towards the leagues where their local stars migrate to in order to follow the exploits of these migrated players in their new clubs. As identified in a statement by a sponsor’s representative, this respondent was of the perception that when players migrate from the local league, they carry the focus of some supporters away because these supporters are attracted to the teams they support based on their attachment to the qualities of particular players. Using Ghana’s Michael Essien of Chelsea Football Club in the English Premier League as an example, this is what he had to say:
…. Should Michael Essien leave to another team, I am sure that majority of … supporters will follow him wherever he goes because he is coming from this country. So the same example can be traced to the local teams… people follow players that they attach importance and associate qualities with so when they move, they are also tempted to move along with them…(SP2, personal communication, June 24, 2011)

*Lack of sponsorship/TV rights.*

Stakeholders also perceived another effect of migration on the local league as the lack of sponsorship and TV rights. Since corporate sponsors want to associate themselves with numbers, it is very difficult for clubs and the league in Ghana to attract huge and adequate corporate sponsorship. Currently, the League is being sponsored by Globacom Ghana Limited with each club earning not more than a $100,000 (LA1, personal communication, June 26, 2011). Though not sufficient, this sponsorship as explained by respondents is the highest sponsorship ever to be received by the Ghana Premier League. Stakeholders indicated however that such sponsorship packages are not made available to league clubs until very late in the season or after the season:

For instance the current league that just ended was being sponsored by GLO and the information I have gathered indicates that even last season …they still have arrears to settle with the Football Association…. the whole of this season, the league has just ended and they have still not paid any. But their name is … mentioned with the Premier League; GLO Premiership …the company is not fulfilling their part of the agreement (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011)

The interviewees indicated the lack of sponsorship as a result of the less patronage of local league games due to the absence of quality players (See comments 50-53, Appendix L).
Respondents revealed the perception of the lack of sponsorship as a consequence of the lack of spectatorship for the local league. Corporate sponsors do not see the opportunity to leverage on a large following for product positioning and visibility. This, however, shows that the lack of sponsorship is not a primary effect of migration but rather a causal effect of less patronage of the league by football fans.

Similarly, the lack of TV rights was also perceived as a negative effect of migration on the Premier league. Due to the absence of quality players in the Ghana Premier League and the lack of interest by soccer fans, there is a lack of media coverage for the local league. As indicated above, the local media tend to focus more on the foreign leagues and the exploits of migrated players in their European clubs because they will want to broadcast what is of most interest to their audience. Consequently the lack of spectatorship and media focus does not encourage media outfits to want to invest so much in buying rights from the Ghana Premier League. Therefore much as there is some sort of TV rights enjoyed by the Premier League from Optimum Media Prime (OMP), who are the right owners, this does not accrue much economic benefit to clubs and the league as a whole. Because of this lack of economic returns on the part of the right owners, corporate entities are reluctant to advertise in the league (See comment 52, Appendix L).

*Negative impact on sports performance.*

The respondents indicated a lack of competition and low quality football in the absence of quality players in the local league. In the view of the respondents, the local league churns out poor and unattractive performances in the absence of these stars (see comments 54-57, Appendix L). In this regard, this is what a league administrator had to say:
In the short term, it affects the quality of the league. That is a fact. It affects the quality of the league but in a year or two, new talents are brought on board and they revamp the quality. So in the short term when the skilful players leave, it creates some vacuum and makes the league a bit slow but as they as the time goes on, new talents are unearthed and then it keeps the league going. But … overall the negative effects sometimes outweigh the positive effects in the sense that it takes a longer time to train a quality player. And so once you unearth a talent, it will be raw. It will take another longer time to unearth that player. And so it has an undulating effect on the positive aspect of the league (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011)

This negative impact on sport performance is not only limited to the local league but also reflects on the performance of Premier League clubs at the continental club level. This statement by a media representative reveals the perception of inconsistent performance of clubs locally and continentally:

… so the migration of players always has a huge effect on the teams’ performance … even the performance in continental competitions because after the league, they qualify for the African Champions League or the Cup Winner Cup… because they get into these competitions minus the players who were key in qualifying them because these players have left for greener pastures outside. … That even accounts for the abysmal performance of Ghanaian clubs in continental competitions lately (personal communication, June 27, 2011)

This statement by the spokesperson indicates the perceptions of the effects of player migration on the performance of league clubs when they do away with the service of their top
stars to the wealthier teams in mostly Europe for economic benefits to help run their clubs locally.

Negative impact on players’ careers.

The loss of local talent and potential stars to failed migration where players don’t make it in their destination countries but refuse to return or are despondent was also identified as an effect on the Premier League. Some players are desperate to migrate so much that they are prepared to migrate even when they have not reached a developed stage to migrate (see comments 58-60, Appendix L). Such players travel outside the country and because they are not well prepared for the conditions in Europe, they are not able to cope and their careers end abruptly. The FA media spokesperson had this to say:

…. [in some cases, migration] does not even allow players to properly mature before they leave because there are examples of many players who left when they were not matured, they got to Europe after a year or two and they could not deal with the issues… their careers have been destroyed… some went to other countries and they messed up their careers. So there are a lot of players whose careers have been destroyed because they did not mature properly (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011)

Others also leave the shores of the country and aided by unscrupulous agents, they go to play under the guise of other names and in the end their careers are nothing to write home about because they do not leave the shores of Ghana well prepared. As stated by a private media respondent,

…. what is happening is that…. even the young ones without going through the windmill and are still on the learning curve …they [young players] immediately move out …. they
don’t even complete any development process… they go to Europe, they are unable to make it to the first team so they hardly get first team place, some are reduced to bench warming so it’s actually thwarts or inhibits their full development (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011)

This statement indicates how some players play the odds in order to play outside the shores of Ghana. When their migration is unsuccessful, most of these players do not return to the Ghana Premier League to resurrect their career but rather remain in their destination countries with no meaningful means to a livelihood. This deprives the league of possible talents that could have been of benefit to the local clubs.

*Negative impact on national teams.*

Finally, some stakeholders perceived a lack of adequate players available to national teams in the event where the clubs of migrated players refuse to release them for national team duties. Even though there are FIFA rules that allow for players to be released by their clubs during periods of international competitions and matches, sometimes players report late or are unable to report to national team calls (see comments 62, 66 and 67, Appendix L). Some stakeholders perceived that the junior national teams of Ghana suffered from the unavailability of their migrated stars when such players are unable to report for national team duties (see comments 62, 64, 65 and 66 Appendix L). Other respondents perceived some level of difficulty in adequate preparation of national teams (61, 63, 65 and 66, Appendix L). One of the respondents who doubled as a management member of the national team stated:

…. I think that perhaps it will be easier to assemble [domestic] players and then have longer camping periods to prepare for games because the players are in your
jurisdiction… It is easier to deal with clubs within your jurisdiction, but if the players are playing outside your jurisdiction, it becomes very difficult for many coaches… The inability …. to have access to players and …. to work with them for a longer period because they do not ply their trade in their jurisdiction… there is the problem for these coaches but because that is the reality, the coaches try as much as possible to plan around the reality which is the fact that you can only get your players for [a] certain limited period of time but I must say that um the more players you have playing in your jurisdiction, that is especially for the junior national teams, the better it helps for camping (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011)

This explains the difficulties that the Ghana national teams face in preparation for tournaments in the absence of their stars who ply their trade in foreign lands. Thus this is not a perception of bad performance on the part of the national team but rather the lack of inadequate preparation time in the absence or delay of invited migrated players.

Initiatives

Suggested initiatives.

As indicated in the literature above, the purpose of this study was to identify what could be done to help curb the migration or reduce the effects of migration on the Ghana Premier from stakeholder’s perspective so that it could have a positive impact on the league. As is evident from previous results and responses, stakeholders perceived mainly negative effects of migration on the Ghana Premier League. These responses (see Appendix M) show some comments by stakeholders as perceived initiatives to address the migration effects on the Ghana Premier League.
All the respondents perceived that an increase in players’ remuneration in the Ghana Premier League will go a long way to help players stay in the local league (comments 67-69, Appendix M). Given that they go through a lot of processes such as facing unfamiliar weather and terrain when they migrate (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011), stakeholders perceived that if clubs can increase their means of generating revenue and pay commensurate or appreciable wages to their players, it will encourage players to stay. Thus players will stay in the local league when they have the desired income rather than migrate to leagues in Europe and other countries to maximize their income (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). This however is dependent on the ability of the Premier League clubs to generate more revenue. From the interviews stakeholders have suggested that clubs seek increased corporate sponsorship and also undertake other sources of generating funds such as the sale of paraphernalia (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). Similarly the Ghana Football Association as well as the Premier League Board should also increase their sources of funding in order to help make the entire league lucrative. In the view of one of the league administrators “this will call for a concerted effort from all stakeholders to come up with various means of attracting the needed financial injections in order to make the league lucrative for local players” (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). Similarly, in summing up what he perceived to be some initiatives to address the migration economic challenges, both at the league and club level, this is what one club administrator had to say:

It is going to be difficult,…. but I think to the extent that the basic reason why they leave is finance, means that the best way to solve that is if there is a way of improving …. the financial health of the clubs through sponsorships, merchandizing, increasing
attendance of the games. These are the ways that will raise the financial capacity of the clubs and once this is done, they should be able to pay the players well so that the players will look at the option of leaving Ghana compared that to living in Ghana… not just the cash earning but other incentives. Look at them [earnings], compare that to Europe and decide that I might want to stay instead of going to Europe to pick up maybe $3,000 or $5,000 or I don’t want to stay. So I am sure basically it’s finance. If there is a way of providing enough finance for the clubs, you will solve the problem of migration because even in Europe, you cannot stop migration…. the teams with the bigger financial means … buy the best players in Europe and so players are moving even from England, the English Premiership to other… leagues because they are paying them better [more] money (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011)

This statement supports stakeholders’ perceptions (see comments 67-69, Appendix M) that when clubs are able to pay players commensurate wages, players will stay in the league and that will also increase the quality of play and make the league competitive. A competitive league will also increase fan interest in the league which will bring increased gate proceeds, sponsorship and TV rights, which also means increased revenue for clubs in the Ghana Premier League.

**Professionalizing club and league administration.**

From the interviews it was perceived by stakeholders that clubs need to institute and engage in sound administrative initiatives to correct the bad practices in club administration in the Ghana Premier League (see comments 70-72 Appendix M). This will increase the level of professionalism in club administration as well as the administration of the league. Some stakeholders suggested that clubs meet standardized requirements where they will be able to
provide adequate infrastructure and also hire the services of qualified personnel who will be able to undertake sound management practices such as brand management, good public relations, etc (see comments 71 and 72 Appendix M) in order to be able to attract corporate sponsors and fans. Stakeholders perceived that most local clubs are faced with the challenge of having basic administrative structures which will ensure a professional approach to club management (See comment 71, Appendix M). This is what one respondent, who is both a league and club administrator, had to say:

> It is important for the clubs to put their house in order, change their management styles and shed the old ways of doing things. They need to look for sponsors, it is important for them to generate enough revenue from other sources. They have to leverage or maximize their potential in terms of merchandizing. The source of income has been a one way stream: gate proceeds! They need to get qualified personnel in areas of public relations, marketing,…get people to draw up proposals and go out there to generate funds from sponsorships and then probably and that can be complimented by gate proceeds. ….. I am sure if clubs will all follow these standards ….generate the needed revenue, they will have enough money to sustain the players…. and then encourage their players to stay till they mature. As football administrators we need to strategize….Football is about people going to watch the players. Now the fan base of football is not only limited to the male community…women and children are watching and getting more involved in football and I think we should involve them as well. We should develop full oriented strategies that will enable clubs to retain or even attract better players from outside (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011).
When this issue is addressed, it will help attract corporate sponsorship and other external sources of finances for a smooth running of their clubs.

*Positive media attention.*

It was identified from respondents that even though the local media give coverage to the local league, it is minimal and sometimes negative (See comment 75, Appendix M). The media however also faces some challenges in the Ghana Premier League in carrying out their duties and some stakeholders identified this as the lack of information from clubs (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). However stakeholders perceive that an increased positive focus on the Ghana Premier by the media will also help to increase fan interest, and encourage supporters to patronize the local league and thereby attracting sponsors (see comments 73, 74, and 76, Appendix M). A club administrator stated the following in regard to increased positive media focus on the local league,

So, all that the media will need to do is to come together and more or less strategize towards a positive coverage of our league. They [the media] need to follow the club’s right from training, right from you know - matches. We [clubs] have these match and post-match interviews…. We [stakeholders] need to go beyond what they [media] are doing to encourage sponsors to come into our league (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011)

This statement confirms the perceptions of both club and league managers that a collective effort between the clubs, league and media would positively impact the league and make it attractive to spectators and corporate sponsors.
Increased infrastructure.

Some respondents identified provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities by the league clubs and the state as a measure that could help reduce the eagerness of players to want to migrate and also encourage spectatorship (see comments 77 - 79, Appendix M). This is a statement from one of the media representatives on the need for infrastructure:

Despite migration we need to improve on the training facilities to enhance the development of the local talents; if there is a pool of very good players then even though some might migrate, we still will have good replacements, so we need continuous improvement in training facilities, methods and then improvement in the competency of the coaches and technical staff (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011)

Legislation for local players.

Some stakeholders have suggested that since players play under the Ghana Football Association, the FA should develop some form of legislation. Players would, for example only be allowed to migrate when they have played in the local league for some time (see comments 81 and 82, Appendix M). However, others have also argued that Ghana is a free state which allows the free movement of its citizens and their right to move to ply their trade wherever. Therefore it will be difficult in the absence of such legislation for the Football Association to impede a player’s movement (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). A league administrator had this to say with regards to some form of legislation to regulate player migration form the premier league in Ghana;

The GFA should rule that no player leaving the shores of Ghana will be given the transfer certificate until the player has played for say a certain number of years… it can be two or three years in the Premier League…. it can be a combination of years in the Premier and
the first division….at least there must be that kind of legislation.. before a player leaves, you must acquire a transfer certificate from the FA. So, if the FA will not give you that certificate because you have not played in the country for say three years or two years, then players will learn to stay and play for the duration of that period before they travel out. That is one thing I think should be enforced…If you [FA] leave them to go without providing an alternative for staying here, then it will continue. The alternative is not to let them go freely like that. So you put a legislation there (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

**Player education.**

Additionally some players are exploited by some player agents who take advantage of players’ desperation, low educational background and lack of knowledge with promises of getting those players’ to play overseas. Stakeholders have suggested that local players be educated through workshops and also at the academy level where they will be more aware of the terrain of migration processes so they sometimes do not end up as a mirage after players have left their home countries (see comments 82 and 83, Appendix M). One respondent suggested the following:

I will suggest that the Ghana League Clubs Association and the GFA and all stakeholders should come out with seminars to educate these players…. Because without players there is no football….we educate our players and let them know that it is good for them to at least stay a little longer in our league and mature before they leave... (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011)
This supports other suggestions by stakeholders that there is the need for player education in the Ghana Premier League to deter players from premature migration and also to prepare them for the outside world of football.

**Consistent fixtures and scheduling of games.**

Other initiatives suggested by stakeholders is that league administrators keep a consistent league schedule which is not interrupted unnecessarily by breaks which are sometimes not even soccer related (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). Similarly it was suggested by the late President of Liberty Professionals that league games be scheduled at varying times with the English Premier League since most local fans have some inclination towards English Premier League (EPL) clubs. Such supporters, in the view of stakeholders, will go to watch EPL games live in sports bars and other screening centres. Therefore it would be a good strategy to schedule local games at times which do not conflict with these games in the EPL (CAI, personal communication, July 9, 2011). Responses from the interviews indicated an inclination by Ghanaian soccer fans towards the EPL and other European leagues (see comments 45 and 46 Appendix L). This trend, as stated by interviewees, has seen fans of the local league neglecting league games and going to see these European leagues on screen or in the comfort of their homes.

**In-progress initiatives.**

Interviews with stakeholders revealed some initiatives which are being undertaken by both the league and the Ghana Premier League clubs to help make the league more lucrative (see comments 86- 93, Appendix N). These initiatives underway include infrastructure, revenue generating activities like enlisting on the stock exchange by clubs, improved game schedules, commercial television, certification of players and some increased professionalism.
Infrastructure.

Currently some clubs have invested into some sort of infrastructure which will help them run their clubs more professionally and also help them with player development clubs in the Premier League. Liberty Professionals, Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko have all embarked on creating some infrastructures to help in club and player development (see comment 86, Appendix N).

Stock exchange.

Other clubs, like Accra Hearts of Oak, have enlisted on the Ghana stock exchange and floated shares for the general public to help raise funds for the running of the club professionally to allow for them to position themselves well financially (see comment 87, Appendix N). A sponsorship respondent had this to say about current initiatives in progress within the Ghana Premier League:

I have to admit that Kotoko and Hearts are trying to improve their lot [destiny] now…. you probably may be aware that Hearts recently is trying to float shares and that is a step in the right direction to ensure that the club is run professionally (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011).

Consistent game scheduling and improved game package.

The league has also instituted new arrangements for the league schedules to imitate the leagues in Europe where there are no unusual breaks which mar the interest in the league (see comment 88, Appendix N). Currently, the FA has programmed league games such that junior teams and academies will play curtain raisers before major league games (see comments 89 and 90, Appendix N). This measure underway ensures that fans get an improved package for game day events and also allow fans to have a peek at up and coming talents of their clubs.
**Commercial television.**

The league administration is also in talks with media outlets with regards to TV rights to help increase the revenue and exposure for the local league. This is a statement from one of the league administrators regarding media rights for the Ghana Premier League: “We are also looking into media rights where we are talking seriously to other big companies to come on board” (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). Additionally in liaison with some agencies the league intends to undertake quality commercial television to help increase the promotion and commercialization of the Ghana Premier League (see comment 91, Appendix N).

**Certification of players.**

In a bid to help control the movement of players, the Ghana football Association through FIFA is going to issue certificates for all players that play games sanctioned by the local federation (see comment 92, Appendix N) and this will help players to identify with the Ghana Football Association; they will need the sanction of the Federation anytime they intend on migrating. This is to regulate the rampant exodus of players from the league and ensure that players stay for some time and mature before they migrate from the local league.

**Professionalism.**

Some league clubs have employed the services of seasoned administrators (see comment 93, appendix N). The GFA, in ensuring that clubs are professionally run, is also in the process of coming out with a club’s licence, which will be given to clubs that meet the requirements before they are allowed to play in the league. The following statement throws light on initiatives that the league administrators are taking in order to instil some degree of professionalism in the Premier league clubs:
Now the club licensing requirement is coming into effect. So there are certain criteria that a league club should meet before it qualifies the club to have the club licensing….So these are initiatives that we are also trying to take in our own way to help so that the management of the clubs will also be done more professionally so that when sponsors come on board, we can be seen to be doing what is expected of us as clubs and an association that is organizing a professional league (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (95)

The factors of player exodus, its impacts and possible initiatives as have been identified by stakeholders of the Ghana Premier League gives data of the effects of elite player exodus on the sports systems in developing countries and initiatives that can be undertaken to reduce the adverse effects and allow for a positive outcome locally. These responses from various stakeholders give evidence and grounds for the discussion of these effects and initiatives in the next section.

**DISCUSSION**

In light of the perceptions of stakeholders identified from interviews with respondents from the Ghana Premier league and the literature review, it is useful to appreciate that the context of Ghana as a developing country is a dominant factor for elite player exodus from the Ghana Premier League (see comments 1-10 Appendix H). Thus factors such as a weak economy, low educational levels, being democratic, and having a passion for football stimulate the decision of players to migrate. Stakeholders from the Ghana Premier League indicated that players primarily migrate for the financial benefits. The literature indicates that economic factors contribute to player’s migration from sending countries to wealthier leagues in other countries (e.g., Darby & Solberg, 2010; Gunder, 1974; Massey et al., 1993). From the perspective of the
stakeholders interviewed, the unavailability of financial incentives by way of player remuneration in the Premier League is the major push factor. Due to this lack of adequate financial remuneration for players in the local league, Darby (2007b) found that, the Ghana Premier League loses players to wealthier leagues in Europe and around the globe. Therefore Ghanaian players migrate to where they expect higher financial returns for their labor as stated by the neoclassical economics theory. This recognition by stakeholders also put Ghanaian players in the category of sports migrants referred to as mercenaries who are motivated by the gains that they make and are in no way attached to where they play their trade (Maguire, 1996).

However, the economic factors do not only pertain to players since it was found that clubs and club owners impacted the migrating process by actively looking for clubs for their local stars in order to have returns on their investments in these players, which then provides them with funds to run their clubs (see comments 11-15, Appendix I). Maguire (1994) stated that clubs in developing countries are involved in dependent trading with wealthier clubs in developed countries. So the results for both players and the club support findings by Darby and Solberg (2010) that Ghanaian players migrate from the local league to Europe and other leagues to maximise the clubs’ gaining power economically.

Other noneconomic reasons such as the opportunity to play for national teams (see Appendix J), adverse management practices by clubs and skill development due to factors such as facilities, competition and superior coaching (see comments 16-26 , Appendix J) were perceived as reasons that influenced the migration of players from the GPL. This is in line with the premises of the human capital theory which explains migration as constituting a decision by individuals to invest in the development of their skill for greater economic returns (Massey et al., 1993; Sjaastad, 1962). It also supports findings by Poli (2006a), which highlighted the high
presence of African players who ply their trade away from home on their various national teams as a factor that influences players to migrate. The need for players to have exposure which accords them the respect and fame accorded migrant players (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011) locally was also identified as a migration factor in the GPL. Studies have demonstrated that some sport labor migrants migrate from their places of origin in order to experience other situations and countries (Maguire & Stead, 1998). Maguire and Stead described this category of migrants as those who seek adventures from their places of competition as adventurers. Therefore availability of infrastructure, adequate training facilities and expertise available to players in Europe and other countries for their personal development as stated by Massey et al. (1993) serve as pull factors (Maguire, 2008) for the migration of players in the Ghana Premier League.

Studies have demonstrated some effects of migration on sending countries (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Hallinan & Jackson, 2008; Kapur & McHale, 2005; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Poli, 2006a, 2006b; Thibault, 2009). Some positive impacts of migration as perceived by stakeholders of the GPL were identified as the economic gains made by players, which helps them to live comfortable lives away from the non-rewarding economic situation in Ghana as found by Darby (2007b). Other players return and invest into the development of Ghana football and through remittance to families and setting up businesses, they also improve the local economy (see comments 27- 30 and comments 33and 34, Appendix K). An example of such migrated players who have invested in infrastructure and player development is Marseille Desailly, who owns the Lizzy sports complex in Ghana (Desailly’s Lizzy Sports Complex officially launched, 2011). Similarly it was revealed from responses of stakeholders that some migrated players take up the roles of ambassadors and serve as role models for younger players.
Ghana’s Anthony Baffoe is a FIFA match commissioner and also a goodwill ambassador for a non-profit organization called Play Soccer Ghana (People, 2011). Interviewees also perceived that the migration of players creates a vacuum which encourages other Premier League players to work hard and hit the limelight, thus it helps to discover newer talents who hitherto might not be known (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011). Literature shows that a benefit is that migrated players serve as role models for those who are left behind (Maguire & Pearton, 2000), and some become ambassadors for their home countries (Gerrard, 2002).

Responses from the interviewees indicated a perception of improved national team(s) performance (see comments 31 and 32, appendix K) with the exception of the Juvenile teams, because of the improved performance of migrated players when they play for the national team. The Ghana national team of the Black Stars, which is made up of mainly migrated players, has had improved achievements and has been profiled as one of the best national teams in recent FIFA rankings (Black Stars Stay Top, 2011). A study by Solberg and Haugen (2008) on the international trade of players in Europe found out that the national teams of sending countries such as Greece, Norway and France have benefitted from exporting their players to leagues in Europe that are of a better quality than their domestic leagues. This development also shows a semblance of dependent development (Gunder, 1974; Bale & Maguire, 1994) because to improve the performance of the national teams, players will have to leave the local league. Thus the Ghana national team improves based on its dependence on players that migrate to foreign leagues. This also results in the local league suffering a situation of dependent underdevelopment because by depending on migrated players to improve the national team, the local league also suffers from the absence of the quality players.
Negative impacts of migration on the Premier league were identified as unfair trade, which see wealthier European clubs splashing offers to local stars and whisking them away from the local clubs (see comments 35 and 36, Appendix L). Local clubs, on the other hand, cannot compete with the offers and remunerations offered to their stars, and are not able to retain their players due to economic factors. This supports assertions by the world system theory that unequal trade relations between core capitalist economies and non-capitalist states create a population which is prone to migrate (Maguire 1999; Wallerstein, 1976).

The exodus of elite players from the GPL leaves the league barren of quality players (Darby, 2009; Kapur, 2005) which results in poor performances of local teams both domestically and continentally. This lack of competitiveness underdevelops the local league as stated by stakeholders (see comments 37-40, Appendix L). This supports Gerard’s (2002) assertion that the lack of quality players underdevelops leagues in developing countries. Similarly, studies have indicated that the migration of players desksills the sending countries and also deprives them from enjoying the services of the best athletes (Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Thibault, 2009).

The absence of quality players affects the local league by way of reducing fan interest and spectatorship, which also negatively impacts revenue generating opportunities from sponsorship and media rights (see comments 50-53, Appendix L). The lack of quality players to the national team in times when European clubs do not release migrated players was also found to have a negative impact on the national teams of Ghana and especially the juvenile teams. This development finds the national teams not having adequate preparation for international assignments and also deprives the national teams of their best assemblage of players. The current Ghana Football Association President, Mr. Kwasi Nyantakyi, in a recent publication asked that European clubs should not unduly prevent invited players to respond to a national team calling.
for the 2012 African Cup of Nations tournament in Guinea (Sports Homepage, 2011b). This supports the perceived inadequate players and preparation time for national team assignments as indicated by stakeholders.

Diversion of the attention of local sports fans and media is also an impact of the migration of players from the Ghana Premier League. In a study of Japanese migrants in MLB, Takahashi & Horne (2006) found that the focus of media on the exploits of Japanese players in the MLB increased its local (Japanese) fan base and also saw some increase in sponsorship from Japanese companies. Similarly, Falcous and Maguire (2005) highlighted the frenzy media attention provoked when David Beckham was transferred at a cost of £24.5 million from Manchester United Football Club in England to Real Madrid Football Club in Spain. This supports the perception that when players migrate, they are able to take with them the loyalty of the local fans to the disadvantage of local sports systems (Thibault, 2009). Kapur & McHale (2005) stated that the lack of spectatorship for local games tends to have a negative impact on sponsorship and TV rights.

To be able to retain players in the Ghana Premier League it has been suggested that there is need for an increase in financial investment both by clubs and leagues in order to be able to pay players commensurate wages to retain them in the local league. Examples of stakeholders’ comments (see comments 67-69, Appendix M) show the perception of increased remuneration as a measure to help curb the exodus of players from the league. Darby and Solberg (2010), in a study of the trajectories present in the Ghana Premier League and the Professional Soccer League in South Africa, suggested that the league encourage financial investment as a means to increase its lucrativeness in order to be able to retain players in the local league.
Increased professionalism and positive media attention from clubs and media respectively can help increase both player and fan interest in the local league and also encourage corporate sponsorship. Stakeholders perceived that when clubs run their activities in a more professional manner they will be able to generate more funding to retain their players. This in turn will improve corporate interest in sponsoring through increased spectatorship (see comments, 70-76, Appendix M). This confirms Darby and Solberg’s (2010) suggestion that an increase in the establishment of sound administrative structures and practices will help increase the lucrativeness of the Ghana Premier League. Currently, there are ongoing developments in the areas of club financing and infrastructure by some league clubs to help them run their clubs more professionally. Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko have been mentioned as clubs who have taken steps in this direction with Hearts of Oak floating shares on the Ghana Stock exchange (Accra Hearts of Oak float shares, 2011) whereas Kotoko has an astute corporate administrator as their chairman (Okyere, 2011). Similarly, both clubs and other clubs have also embarked on some facility infrastructure efforts to help player development and fan participation as suggested by some stakeholders (see comments 77-79, Appendix M). Ongoing discussion between the GFA is aimed at improving getting media and right holders on board to help increase the commercialization of the league and generate funding to make it more lucrative.

Although Ghana is a democratic country that allows its citizenship the right to freedom of movement, labour and capital, stakeholders have suggested that the GFA in consultation with the state develop some form of regulation which will help local stars stay in the local league for some time before they migrate to other leagues in Europe and beyond. This will help players commit to playing in the Ghana Premier League and help decrease the rampant exodus of local stars within the shortest possible time of their discovery. Darby et al. (2007) indicated that
sending countries develop strategies to monitor and regulate the movement of players from local sports systems. The Premier League administrators in this regard are in the process of making sure that migrating players are granted certification which allows them to migrate. This is to help regulate player movement and ensure that players remain in the league a longer period of time before they migrate. Similarly, stakeholders have suggested that, since most players lack the education and maturity and migrate only to get exploited by agents and clubs overseas (Gavalas, 2011), there is the need to educate and sensitize local players to help them stay and mature in the league before they migrate to Europe and other countries to ply their trade.

Finally some stakeholders advised that the Premier League games are scheduled at times that do not conflict with European leagues like the EPL. This is to ensure that supporters are able to patronize local games when they are scheduled at different times. Currently the GFA has managed to structure some games at times that vary from the European games and have also streamlined games schedules to be more consistent and avoid or limit the amount of times that the league usually went on break unduly in previous seasons.

All these suggestions and in-progress initiatives, as perceived by stakeholders, will help to reduce the exodus of players from the league as well as lower the adverse effects that the absence of these players have on the Ghana Premier League.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine stakeholders’ perspectives on the effects of elite player exodus on the Ghana Premier League and to seek the suggestions of stakeholders as to what initiatives could be undertaken to reduce this effect. The results of this study indicate that overall stakeholders perceive a negative effect of migration on the Ghana Premier League. However some processes inherent in the migration of Ghanaian players as well some characteristics of the country of Ghana, and the Ghana Premier League, are contributory factors to the migration effect. Overall financial reasons were identified as the major motivating factor for player migration from the Ghana Premier League. For instance the low economic power of the country Ghana with its resultant lack of financial capabilities both on the part of the league and the clubs, who lack a lot of revenue generating activities, have been cited as reasons why players in Ghana are migrating. Other factors such as the lack of infrastructure and lack of professionalism on the part of club administrators and the league, have also been raised as factors that need to be addressed if the local league in Ghana is to see some improvement which encourages their best talents to stay. Stakeholders have indicated awareness and have even instituted some initiatives to help rescue the situation. Even though the league and clubs have embarked on some initiatives such as the institution and practice of sound administrative initiatives, and on vigorous revenue generating activities, it is yet to be seen how these initiatives will impact on the league’s lucratively to encourage players to stay, and improve spectator interest, and the positive spin offs that accrue from that (e.g., increased sponsorship and TV rights).
Delimitations and Limitations

The definition of migration was delimited to the movement of players from one country to another between different continents even though the definition for migration could generally mean the moving from one place to another (Zhang et al., 2006). This study was delimited to international migration as is present in sports such as cricket (Maguire & Stead, 1996), basketball (Maguire & Falcous, 2005), baseball (Breton, 2000) and hockey (Maguire, 1996). Furthermore, the study was delimited to the effects on player exodus in developing countries and Ghana in particular over the last two decades (e.g. Darby, 2007a; 2007b; Darby & Solberg, 2010, Poli, 2006b). The sample for this study was therefore limited to the Ghana Premier League due to the increase in player migration from the league and concerns raised by stakeholders (Ghana, 2009; Sports Homepage, 2010b) in the league. Other individuals, countries and leagues may have different experiences of the migration phenomena and participants from other populations might have responded differently. Players as main actors were also not included and thus this study is delimited to the perception of stakeholders involved in the administration of, and experience with the Ghana Premier League as illustrated in the participants’ table (see Table 3). Finally, the study is also delimited to male soccer players even though there is evidence of talent migration of female soccer players from developing countries (Darby & Solberg, 2010).

The study is limited in sample size and thus should not be generalized to a larger population or replicated (Esterberg, 2002; Gratton & Jones, 2010). Furthermore the study was limited to male soccer migration and since football is the dominant sports in Ghana, that also influenced the use of the Ghana Premier League. Another characteristic inherent in interviews is that it is less objective because the researcher’s values and beliefs could interfere with the analytical process. The researcher minimized these possible biases as best he could during this
study. The researcher did not ask suggestive questions but rather allowed respondents to voluntarily reveal their own perceptions of the migration phenomenon. Due to these delimitations and limitations, the researcher does not intend to generalize the findings of this study but to treat it as the perceptions of major stakeholders within the Ghana Premier League. Although the research was conducted using the Ghana Premier League as a case study, many of the issues raised by participants are likely to be relevant in other African countries and developing countries for that matter (Poli, 2006b).

**Implication of studies**

The findings of these studies are vital to local sports systems with similar structures such as the Ghana Premier League. The identified initiatives to reduce the exodus of elite players will help other similar leagues in developing countries. Injecting economic vibrancy into local leagues will keep local talents within local leagues in developing countries for a long time or retain them since they can see the possibility of a bright economic future to their career. Also the increase of infrastructure in local systems in developed countries can help players add value to their talents and develop to an appreciable stage before they migrate to other well developed and wealthier leagues. Similarly league clubs stand the chance of getting a better compensation when they have been able to retain players and provide players with added value before engaging them to foreign clubs (W. Abbra – Appiah, personal communication, June 22, 2011). Brainstorming on a regular basis by stakeholders will also help to find solutions to address identified challenges within local sports systems and allow for an increased interest in local leagues. A constant education and awareness for clubs and existing players in local leagues in developing countries to appreciate the resultant effects of migration on the leagues will help sensitize stakeholders to work collectively to make their leagues more lucrative.
Theoretically, this study adds to the numerous migration theories like the human capital theory (Massey et al., 1993) based on the fact that the desire for players to migrate to have access to facilities and technical expertise for their personal development was identified as a pull factor (Maguire and Pearton, 2000). Non-monetary factors such as the opportunity to play for one’s national team and the fame that comes along with being a foreign based player also gives a better appreciation of the nature of push factors that influence players’ decisions to migrate from the local sports systems. Additionally, the study provides a better understanding of the complexity of the economic factor which was identified as the dominant factor for player migration. Since the return on investment for clubs was identified as an underlying factor that influences player migration, it is important for economic theories (Massey et al., 1993) to recognize other factors aside from the rational decision making of the migrating players. As an initiative, the study supports suggestions by Darby and Solberg (2010) for developing countries like Ghana to have better regulatory systems for player migration and also to increase professionalism in the local league to help reduce the rate of player migration. The study provides evidence in support of many complex theories of migration. It helps researchers to identify the different factors that are present in developing countries that compel athletes to migrate and also helps come up with workable theories and suggestions that will be beneficial to the discourse on how to reduce the rate of the migration phenomenon or how it can have a positive effect on sending countries.

**Directions for Future Study**

One revealing aspect of the study was the stakeholders’ perspective that players will stay in the Ghana Premier league if their commensurate wages are met. Future studies could examine players’ perspective on whether they would be willing to stay in the Ghana Premier in League the event of clubs providing commensurate wages for their talents. Also this study has indicated
that stakeholders, in recognition of the effects of elite player migration on the Ghana Premier League, have undergone some structural changes. It would be worthwhile for future researchers to examine if these suggested initiatives as well as those already embarked upon will improve the fortunes of the league and help the league to retain elite players. As suggested by one of the respondents, it would be of benefit for future researchers to examine from both male and female players’ perspectives if there are any major reasons aside from economic factors for why players migrate. Additionally the sample of this study could be widened to examine the perceptions of stakeholders from similar African countries and other developing countries in order to have a greater scope to allow for comparison and generalization.
REFERENCES


Black Stars: The long road to greatness. Ghana: Sportphoto Limited


NVivo8 (2008). *NVivo8 Fundamentals: Starting to work with your material.* S. l.: QSR International Pty Ltd.


Hello (verify contact person; stakeholder)

(If Yes: Proceed with phone call; and if No: end call)

My name is Ian Osei Owusu. I am a Master student in the department of Kinesiology University of Windsor. I am conducting a study related to the Effects of Player Exodus on Sport Systems in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the Ghana Premier League. I am conducting the study for my master thesis under the supervision of Dr. Marijke Taks.

The University of Windsor Ethics Board has approved this study. Your contact information was obtained through your organization.

I am calling to ask if you are willing to participate in this study. You have been identified as a Stakeholder who is knowledgeable in the migration of players from the Ghana Premier League to wealthier Leagues. I was hoping you would be willing to volunteer to participate in a telephone interview that will take about 40-50 minutes of your time.

(If Yes: Proceed; if No: Thank the stakeholder for their time and end call).

I would like to send you a letter that outlines the goals of this study and confirms research ethics approval. Would I be able to get an email or mailing address to send this letter of information?

I will email the letter immediately and we can arrange an interview time once you have read through the letter of information. These interviews are scheduled between May and June, 2011.

Please free to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix B

Copy of First Email Going Out

Dear [Stakeholder]

I am currently undertaking a study related to the effects of elite player migration and its effect on local sports systems: a case study of the Ghana Premier League.

This email is being sent to ask for your participation in this research study. Based on your function within the Ghana Premier League, you have been identified as an individual with expertise in the Ghanaian Premier League since the 1990s. Your e-mail address was obtained from your organization.

Your participation would consist of a telephone interview, answering questions pertaining to the migration of elite players from the league and its effects on the Ghana Premier League.

This study has received Research Ethics Board clearance from the University of Windsor. I am hopeful you would be willing to consider this request. A letter of information outlining the study’s goals, and confirming research ethics approval is attached to this e-mail.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, would you be so kind to provide me a telephone number so I can contact you in the next couple of days to arrange an interview date and time. I would like to schedule the interviews in the month of May. Should you not wish to participate in this study, feel free to send an e-mail and we will withdraw your name from the study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or my advisor at the phone number or email below.

I thank you very much in advance for taking this invitation into consideration.

Sincerely,

Ian Osei Owusu
Principal Investigator
Email oseiow@uwindsor.ca
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Dr. Marijke Taks
(Advisor; Professor of Sport Management)
Email: XXXXX@uwindsor.ca
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX
Appendix C

LETTER OF INFORMATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Title of study: The Effects of Elite Player Exodus on Sport Systems in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the Ghana Premier League

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ian Osei Owusu (student) under the direction of Dr. Marijke Taks (faculty), from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Windsor. These results will be contributing to my thesis, which is an essential component for the completion of my Master’s Degree in Human Kinetics (Sports Management).
If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact my advisor Dr. Marijke Taks at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX mtaks@uwindsor.ca) or myself at XXX-XXX-XXXX XXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
To examine the effects of elite player migration on the Ghana Premier League from a stakeholders’ perspective, and to find initiatives that can reduce the effects and to help improve the fortunes of the domestic league, despite migration.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a telephone interview with the primary investigator. The interview will last approximately 40-50 minutes.

This study has received Research Ethics Board clearance from the University of Windsor.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
There are no known risks, discomforts any inconvenience, physical or psychological associated with this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND /OR SOCIETY
The research may gain insight into the effects of player exodus of elite players from developing countries. Also it will afford you the opportunity to benefit by thinking about how the migration of players affects the development of the Local league and your role as a stakeholder. Finally, it will afford you the opportunity to suggest initiatives that may be taken to control the adverse effects of migration on the Ghana Premier League.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
There is no payment for this study. However each participant will be presented with a University of Windsor souvenir when the researcher goes home in December, 2011.
ANONYMITY / CONFIDENTIALITY

Information obtained from this study will be used for the communication of the results. Your name will not be disclosed with the dissemination of the results. However, information regarding your function will be provided and therefore you could be identified. Thus we are guarantee confidentiality, but cannot guarantee anonymity. All audio recorded interviews and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigators’ office. There is no access to this cabinet by anyone other the investigators. Transcribed interviews will be kept secure and all audio recordings will be destroyed after verification of transcriptions. All materials will be destroyed after the publication of results.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to be in this study or not. You may also volunteer to withdraw from this study any time up and until you complete this interview. You may also refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study.

FEEDBACK OF RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

The investigator will send a summary of the results of this study to participants. The results will also be posted on the University of Windsor’s Faculty of Human Kinetics website (http://www.uwindsor.ca/hk) under ‘Research’ and ‘Feedback to Research Participants’, as soon as the results are available by December 2011. As well, the results will be posted at the University of Windsor’s Research Ethics Board website by December, 2011 (http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb). If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to email or call the investigators at the address or number above. Please hold on to this letter of information.

USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw from this study any time up and until you complete this interview without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, university of Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX; e-mail: XXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca
I understand the information provided for the study The Impact of the Recession on Youth Sport Programs in a Local Community as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator
Date

NB: Please print a personal copy of this Letter of Information.
Appendix D

Interview Guide

Procedure
Greeting and introduction of interviewer

Introduction of the purpose of the study

[Tape recorder is started]

Verbal consent sought from participant

Please in the absence of you not being able to sign the consent for participation and consent for audio taping; do I have your verbal consent to go ahead with this interview?

Familiarization (to describe the background of the interviewees)

What type of stakeholder are you currently in the Ghana Premier League?

How long have you been affiliated with the Ghana Premier League?

What is your role in the league and how long have you been playing this role?

Content Questions:

What is your overall perception of player migration in the Ghana Premier League?

1. What in your opinion are the factors that motivate or influence the migration of players from the Ghana Premier League?

Probes

- Economic reasons
2. Can you identify any effects of player migration on the developments or underdevelopments of the Ghana Premier League?

Probes

a) What is your perception about the impact of migration on available talents to the Ghana Premier League?

b) Do you think that migration stalls the developments of the local league? How?

c) What are some difficulties you perceive in the local media coverage of the local league in the face of player migration?

d) We know that media plays a vital role in the league; how does media coverage affect sponsorship TV in relation to player migration?

e) Can you outline the challenges that league clubs face in retaining their most talented players?

f) How does the inability of the Clubs to retain best players affect the Premier League?

g) In your opinion, does player migration affect national assignments in any way? In what ways?

Finding Solutions

3. In view of the departure of local talents and its effects on the league, what do you think can be done to curb or control the situation?
Probes

h) Can you outline some suggestions that you think will help reduce the exodus of the players from the League?

i) Can you suggest what can be done to have a positive effect on the league despite migration?

Concluding Thoughts

Is there any other signification you would like to provide on the effects of migration of local players from the Premier League that will be of benefit to this study?

I would be happy to provide you with a completed summary of the findings of this study. Can you please confirm your regular mail and email address?

.................................................................

Thank you very much for your co-operation.
APPENDIX E

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY
The Effects of Elite Player Exodus on Sport Systems in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the Ghana Premier League

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ian Osei Owusu (student) under the direction of Dr. Marijke Taks (faculty), from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Windsor. These results will be contributing to my thesis, which is an essential component for the completion of my Master’s Degree in Human Kinetics (Sports Management).

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact my advisor Dr. Marijke Taks at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX (XXXX@uwindsor.ca) or myself at XXX-XXX-XXXX (XXXXXX@uwindsor.ca).

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PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a telephone interview with the primary investigator. The interview will last approximately 40-50 minutes.

This study has received Research Ethics Board clearance from the University of Windsor.

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POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

The research may gain insight into the effects of player exodus of elite players from developing countries. Also it will afford you the opportunity to benefit by thinking about how the migration of players affects the development of the Local league and your role as a stakeholder. Finally, it will afford you the opportunity to suggest initiatives that may be taken to control the adverse effects of migration on the Ghana Premier League.

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Information obtained from this study will be used for the communication of the results. Your name will not be disclosed with the dissemination of the results. However, information regarding your function will be provided and therefore you could be identified. Thus we are guarantee confidentiality, but cannot guarantee anonymity. All audio recorded interviews and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigators’ office. There is no access to this cabinet by anyone other the investigators. Transcribed interviews will be kept secure and all audio recordings will be destroyed after verification of transcriptions. All materials will be destroyed after the publication of results.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to be in this study or not. You may also volunteer to withdraw from this study any time up and until you complete this interview. You may also refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study.

FEEDBACK OF RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

The investigator will send a summary of the results of this study to participants. The results will also be posted on the University of Windsor’s Faculty of Human Kinetics website (http://www.uwindsor.ca/hk) under ‘Research’ and ‘Feedback to Research Participants’, as soon as the results are available by December, 2011. As well, the results will be posted at the University of Windsor’s Research Ethics Board website by December, 2011 (http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb). If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to email or call the investigators at the address or number above. Please hold on to this letter of information.

USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw from this study any time up and until you complete this interview without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, university of Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext XXXX; e-mail: XXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study The Impact of the Recession on Youth Sport Programs in a Local Community as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.
Oral consent at the beginning of the interview will suffice.

____________________________________
Name of Subject

____________________________________
Signature of Subject Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

____________________________________
Signature of Investigator Date
Appendix F

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Dear (Stakeholder):

Title of Study: Effects of elite player exodus on sport systems in developing countries: A case study of the Ghana Premier League

I consent to the audio-taping of an interview.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. Recordings will be transferred to a secured laptop only accessible with a password by the researcher and stored in a locked room.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio recording will be for professional use only.

If unable to physically to sign consent form, the researcher will sign them on my behalf with my verbal consent prior to interview.

__________________________________________  
(Research Subject)                                      Date
## Appendix G

### Themes for Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Sub Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for Migration</td>
<td>Context of Ghana: A dominant factor for player migration</td>
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<td>Players low socio economic status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ghana a democratic country.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Passion for football and players regarded as heroes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monetary factors impacting player’s migration</td>
<td>Weak economy affects sponsorship and therefore players’ salary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Returns on investment (ROI) for clubs: underlyng push factor</td>
<td>Non-monetary factors impacting player’s migration</td>
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<td>Skill development</td>
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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Superior coaching</td>
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<td>Exposure</td>
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<td>National team.</td>
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<td>Lack of quality players and deskilling.</td>
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<td><em>Lack of spectatorship.</em></td>
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<td><em>Diversion of attention towards European Leagues</em></td>
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<td><em>Lack of sponsorship/ TV rights.</em></td>
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<td><em>Negative impact on sports performance</em></td>
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<td><em>Negative impact on players’ careers</em></td>
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<td><em>Negative impact on national teams</em></td>
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<td>Increased player remuneration</td>
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<td>Professionalizing in club and league administration</td>
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<td>Positive media attention</td>
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<td>Legislation for local players</td>
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<td>Player education</td>
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<td>Consistent fixtures and scheduling of games</td>
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<td>TV Commercialization</td>
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<td>Professionalism</td>
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Appendix H

Comments on Ghana’s Context as a Country: A Dominant Factor for Player Migration

Ghana as a developing country
You are dealing with a country like Ghana with economic challenges and you have a situation where even in other spheres people are looking forward to travel abroad for the so-called greener pastures... You know the ability to generate revenue is closely linked to the size of the country, the economy... From our end in Ghana it appears that it's only the telecom industry, the mobile telephone industry that has some semblance of competition and it is when there is competition that you also find companies willing to spend a lot more on sponsorship especially in football where it entails a lot of money (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (1)

You know the economy is very bad in Africa and particularly in Ghana. If you compare what players are making outside, in Europe and other countries... you cannot compare that with what they are making here in Africa especially in Ghana... with any opportunity a player in Ghana gets, the player feels that he needs to go... everyone knows that the purpose of their [players] migration is mostly financial issues (FR1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (2)

Low player socio economic status
Now first of all, let us look at the background of the players. In a very restricted and challenging economy, the majority of our players are from poor homes... Secondly, they appear once again with all apologies, not to be well educated in terms of formal education... and not properly trained for any other skilled job apart from football... (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (3)

Now on the player’s side, a lot of our players currently, are probably not the most educated in our society? A lot of them don’t have the opportunity to... get out of the poverty for obvious reasons. They come from working class background or possibly you know poor income backgrounds. So they see football as the only meal ticket they have (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (4)

Democracy
Of course Ghana is a democratic country... our constitution guarantees freedom of movement, freedom of capital and freedom of labour so you cannot restrain them (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (5)

According to our laws there is freedom of movement and players are allowed just like any other type of work or labour, to move wherever they want... so you cannot legislate when the player can leave and whether the player can leave or not (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (6)

Passion for football and players as heroes
Let me say that football is... adored by all Ghanaians and for that reason when you talk about football in Ghana, then you touch the heart of... individuals living in this...
country…..If you are a player in Ghana, then you become a public figure….you are known if you are a good player… you feel very important … Then you have the fame as a player. You go to certain lengths and places where normally if you are not a player you would not have had the opportunity of going …. And so if you are a footballer in Ghana to some very larger extent … a big public figure and that one needs to sort of be able to live up to a certain standard within that frame and by this it means you [the player] sometimes needs to migrate before you can acquire the respect you deserve. If you stay here for a longer time you might not get it (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (7)

**Weak economy impacts sponsorship**

So the players are moving out of the country because they want greener pastures. First of all you look at better living conditions; you [player] look at your salary and the conditions in the country …..To make it[the league] lucrative you have to approach sponsors but look at the situation in this part of the world where the companies are even dying…Of course … you know the conditions outside are mostly better than the conditions here. So we have to be realistic (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 201). (8)

The clubs are very poor…so they do not pay commensurate wages to these players. Now the players in about 90% of the cases are the bread winners of their families…they are looking for opportunities for financial greener pastures. …there are a whole lot of Ghanaian players in sometimes Vietnam, India, and Nepal …no pun intended (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (9)

The economic power in the country is not big enough to cater for these players and their salaries are not high enough. There is no player in this country who can even … get a salary of let’s say GHC 1000 in a month. So I think their migration is as a result of not enough money in the country (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (10)
Appendix I

Comments on Returns on Investment (ROI) for Local Clubs: An Underlying Push Factor for Player Migration

That is how bad the situation can get so against that largely economic reasons, it is always difficult for the local clubs to resist the lure of money and reject the offers from the foreign clubs (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (11)

Club football is not for charity now so once you are spending you must also get the returns and that is why when the players are moving [migrating] you cannot stop the player from leaving the club (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 201). (12)

Assuming you have a three year or four year contract with a player and the player is doing well…. if at the end of the last year of the players contract you don’t make sure to sell this player or to transfer the player, you will lose the player and all the investment you have done on this player will have reaped no benefit. So for you as a business man, you have to… put structures in place because there is no available money for you to use to run the club ….so you maybe have to go to the bank to get a loan. So as a business man you have to plan well; if you invest money you have to get it back so if the contract of the player is ending …. If you are not smart enough to let the player migrate so that you can have reap that money back …at the end of the day it makes it difficult for you to run the club (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 2011). (13)

For the owners of clubs they will look at this as a business, and for the fans they want to see the skilful player for entertainment.... (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (14)

Of course some of the clubs themselves are culprits because they need the monies generated from such migrations to be able to survive (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (15)
Appendix J

Comments on Non-monetary Factors Impacting Player Migration

National Team Opportunity

Then again, you get to play for one of the national teams. If you want to play for one of the national teams, then sometimes the temptation is that you must migrate otherwise you might not be invited. You might be a very good player playing locally but if you are outside there playing for any of these foreign clubs, then your chances of being invited to play for the national teams like the Black Stars is very bright. That is the perception of our coaches and a lot of people…(LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (16)

And why would the player want to leave? Because the structural challenges are that the GFA has made it a point to invite players who are playing outside to constitute the various national teams. So at any given time when the national team is constituted about 80% to 90% are those who are playing outside, the local players are not encouraged. So every player feels that once he gets outside the country, he has a better chance of being invited to play for the national team…. (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (17)

Skill development

Well in case of personal skill development of course they believe that the European leagues offer better facilities and of course in terms of exposure it’s higher (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (18)

Infrastructure

I admit in Europe the leagues and the structure have been developed much better than we do here, there are better training facilities so, players when they get there many of them …improve on their skill level and of course they make them more attractive (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (19)

Obviously in terms of infrastructure, there are better facilities outside….there are a few things that the players will go out to add to their game in terms of tactics, mental toughness, health care or Medicare, better dieting and all that due to the availability of resources (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (20)

… Now playing fields are also a problem. League clubs don’t even have their own playing fields let alone their own stadiums….Talk of infrastructure, the playing fields that we used to have, have all been used for other purposes other than sports or recreation. We no longer have those fields there so players even find it difficult to have playing fields to even train on. If a club in Accra wants a land for a training field, it has to travel to the outskirts of the city because you [club] cannot get any land here [prime areas in the city] for these purposes (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (21)
Coaching

It starts from unavailability of credible and well or stellar sporting facilities in the country and unavailability of adequate or expertly trained coaches or managers of the individual clubs and teams (SP1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (22)

Exposure

…Every player’s aim is to play in Europe. Most of them are so eager to move to Europe so that they can get a bigger club to play for …. On some occasions I believe it may not only be finance or may be economic problem. There are times, they also feel like they want to become very well known worldwide so and playing locally might not help in that regard…. (FR1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (23)

And there are also players who might think that they have played in Ghana for so long and therefore they will like to go have experience somewhere and get the exposure, …develop further and then broaden their horizon…. They might have played in this country for a long travel outside and decide look around and see whether they can rub shoulders with players in Europe or let’s say in the Americas … therefore they will want to go and share their experience somewhere else (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (24)

Nagative Management Practice

We call our league a professional league, but they (the clubs) are not necessarily run professionally. They are sometimes a one man business, and there is no development from the player’s perspective….and for the player, it is all about money so if they [player] can’t earn enough in Ghana, they will go anywhere else not necessarily to just Europe. They will go to the country or the next team that can pay them more than what they are currently earning. So that is what is driving that …. The player’s ambition is to make more money and the clubs themselves are not run professionally to give the players enough reason for them to stay in Ghana. …..And I say that because if it is run professionally, then it will be seen as a business for which you must have enough like most businesses…..The only difference is that while companies are being run professionally, football at the club level here it’s not being run professionally by the competent people (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (25)

You would also want to have a look at the situation where the clubs themselves …let me put it that lack of professional management of the club. If the clubs themselves do not manage the club professionally, if they do not draw a clear distinction between the owners of the club the administrators the coaching and technical department…you have a situation where clubs are virtually run by individuals … and even then as to whether the people who do that have knowledge or have formal training in football administration is another matter. So if we don’t run our clubs very well, as clubs we will not be able to position the players in a situation where they will want to stay longer and play in the Ghanaian league …. (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (26)
Appendix K

Comments on Positive Effects of Migration

Sport development for clubs

Some players will come back and become coaches and therefore can be adopted by any of the PL clubs to benefit from the expertise of their coaching and experience (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (27)

Some of them [players] the very few good ones and those with foresight reinvest into football for what football has done for them and they also enter into other areas of our football development. I will give you a classical example of Marcel Desailly, even though he did not start his game from this country he’s back in this country and making a lot of developmental projects towards infrastructure development (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (28)

It brings in a lot of money for the individuals and then it improves the local football economy and then the general economy (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011) (29)

Because as they, if the good ones don’t go, or the known and skillful ones don’t go, the opportunities for the young and unknown ones to play will not be there. So in the very short term we will see it as a negative effect ….. but once they leave, there is the opportunity also for the untapped skills to be unearthed (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011). (30)

National team improvement

… the national team benefits because these players that migrate are able to enhance or improve themselves for which we benefit on the national level. So it is a double edge. The local league suffers from an entertainment point and the national team benefits from the quality so that is my overall impression for now. For now no because the evidence is clear from our two participation in the World Cup … but then there is a positive aspect because these go out there and they play in competitive leagues and therefore playing in competitive leagues, psychologically they rub shoulders with the best in the world so it breaks the psychological barriers that they are as good as anyone in the world so that when they meet with any team they are better prepared (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011) (31)

I must say that it has been good and bad because you can see that our clubs are not very strong but when you look at our national teams for especially the Black Stars, they are very strong. The good thing is that the fact that they have had the opportunity to play outside, the training they go through and the financial reward that they get you know when they come home they look more prepared and happy. These days the Black Stars have been rebranded so that every Ghanaian footballer outside there want to be associated with the Black Stars so now it is not like previously when you even call players they don’t want to come but now
anytime we call players, even they themselves manage and try to avail themselves for justifies for the national team. So now the national team has become attractive and that is the good thing (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (32)

**Other areas of the economy/society**

There are others who have also invested in the national economy by way of building hotels and that has a positive impact….Then there’s the kind of money from financial competitions that we [the country] derive from these international games. Apart from what their direct dependants benefit from, their acquisition will also go up to cushion the national economy by way of remittances to their families…. So foreign exchange is equally generated into the Ghanaian economy (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (33)

At the same time, the families of these players are better off because of the amount of monies they[players] send to their families and the developments they also embark in the country from the salaries and wages that they receive from playing outside (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (34)
Unfair trade

… So straightaway, the two got Hearts of Oak some money. But the team made a loss because you don’t sell your top gems and go and buy mediocre players. You sell them to go buy equally competent players….The point I am making here is that, although the players went, the money that the club had from their sale was not enough to get replacement players… Looking at the way that the transfer process works in Ghana and everywhere, you pay something to the player’s former club. If you take a figure let’s say $100,000 and in terms of percentage, you give the agent who worked the deal let’s say 20%, you pay something to the GFA for football development and pay something to the player’s former club, by the time all this is done you might be left with $50,000, or $40,000. What are you going to do with this money? You will not be able to go to the market to recruit a better player or an equally good player (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (35)

Lack of quality players

You have a situation where the league lacks exciting players, but how do we develop exciting players… it does not enable the players to stay too long in our system and they have the desire to leave …You lose one or two superstars that you are able to unearth today, and it takes you about two to three more years to get an equal player…. even before the discovered player hits the limelight or gets to stardom, he is whisked away and so the situation becomes a vicious cycle…. (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (37)

Everybody [player] as soon as they hit the limelight they are poached by the money splashing clubs from Europe, so they find it difficult to retain their top talents and it has an effect on the standard of play …clubs don’t have a pool of talented players to work around so they are compelled to use just what’s available and not the best available. They can’t really have medium to long-term planning with these players because in between the season, they just move abroad (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (38)

Now player migration has made it impossible for the clubs to retain players so for example we have a season that is done and there’s a top scorer, best player, best defender and the likes….the next thing you hear is that they [players] have left the
shores of the country for greener pastures in Europe or elsewhere. So it denies the league the opportunity of having quality, tried and tested stars that attract fans to the stadium like it used to be some years ago (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (39)

It is depriving the league a lot of players nowadays and there by reduces the quality of the league. I would like that talented players identified will stay here to actively participate in the league till their career ends but unfortunately, we are not getting that…the exodus of players is on a monthly or weekly basis …We hardly get the skilled player that you can identify and would love to watch in the league now…because immediately they have the chance they want to leave and go outside the country …the good materials [players] are not always available, the good materials are always outside (SP1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (40)

**Lack of Spectatorship**

Because all the best players are leaving, the spectators do not think they are getting the best value for money and so attendances have dropped…. it is in terms of the quality of game…. once the level of competition is lower it means spectatorship will also drop (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (41)

The supporters are not patronizing the clubs home matches and this has affected the clubs seriously…Ghanaian football fans always want the best to watch and for instance, if someone [player] emerges and leaves, it affects the support base of the various clubs. Formerly Asante Kotoko for instance which is the team that I am supporting, whenever we [Kumasi Asante Kotoko] play at the Baba Yara sports stadium people go to the stadium a day before and spend the night at the stadium for the match the following day in order to get tickets at the gate. But today even when it gets to kick off, we see the whole place [stadium] is barely full (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (42)

Their [supporters] interest also dwindles in the games and they don’t attend matches…they think that the league is no more attractive and are not going to the stadium….that causes great disincentive to the local league because the fans are taken away from the stadium (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (43)

People are unable to go and watch our matches so we now play to empty stadiums. Because who is there for supporters to go and watch? Is it the mediocre players we are going to watch in our league? No it has affected our league considerably…it has affected the attendance (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (44)

**Diversion of attention to European leagues**

Fans or supporters are now saying that the league is no longer attractive and they prefer watching the English Premier League on television to going to the stadium to watch the local teams playing without the stars. They just take that option and stay at home and watch in the comfort of their homes (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (45)
Then you have a situation where you tune in to our radio stations over here and about 80% of the coverage is for the foreign sports. The young boy in the street can give you the line-up of Man United, Chelsea, Arsenal or AC Milan … and then you ask him [young boy] to give you the line-up of Hearts of Oak or Kotoko and it is a challenge. When we go about running down our league as media men, when we go about not seeing anything positive in our league, definitely it will not be too attractive (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (46)

They promote foreign leagues than that of our country ….. If you take every radio station in this country, if they are to have one hour for their sports discussion, they will use almost 40 minutes of this time to discuss foreign games (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (47)

It is sometimes frustrating and it doesn’t make for good journalism because of that you go to the stadium and it looks like the interest is waning in favour of European football so even for the sport journalist it can be a demotivating factor (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (48)

Because the players leave and go outside to play, they pick the steam out of the Premier League and therefore the press also tend to follow them and report more on them than they even report on the local league. Therefore instead of hyping the local league they rather hype the foreign leagues to the detriment of the local league and therefore they just sway the attention of the local fans towards the foreign matches. During commentaries and during their presentations in the local media, they highlight the foreign matches than the local league and it is not helping the migration issue any better (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (49)

**Lack of sponsorship/TV rights**

Also, since the standard has fallen and it continues to fall what it means is that there is very little that the clubs can make out of TV rights because the TV stations or the media because of the decline in attendance decline in public interest They [sponsors] can only pay so much to the clubs and the title owners, so it has a negative consequence on TV rights and sponsorship (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (50)

It doesn’t give a lot of financial gains to the teams locally because the funds that they could get through sponsorships do not happen. Let’s not forget that if you don’t have the quality football facility and quality teams playing, it’s hard to attract any reliable and credible investor or credible sponsor to invest money. Every sponsor on an ROI level will like to invest their limited resources into an aspect that they think will give them their expected returns and there is no quality player to motivate people to watch and to let people gear towards them [corporate sponsors] why invest in the league (SP1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (51)

….this migration in a way has affected the sponsorship in the league. No corporate body will like to sponsor a league which has no stars. Because people will lose interest in the league and so why should they
[company] give out money or sponsor the league when nobody will be buying the product of these concerns. So sponsorship even if you have will be very low in terms of the funding, that one is obvious. It has affected sponsorship…. Television rights are with OMP that is the name of the company here. And yes they try as much as possible to give coverage to some of these matches we play every weekend. Television rights are with OMP that is the name of the company here. And yes they try as much as possible to give coverage to some of these matches we play every weekend. The companies OMP will like to approach for advertisement will say nobody is watching your league and so why should they sponsor to buy some rights [advertising] from you. The sponsorship packages or the sponsorship purse is so low so you cannot afford to pay much to the player to retain him, so the player leaves (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (52)

Yeah it affects the attendance to the games and thereby affects attracting sponsorship to the local league because potential sponsors are looking at also leveraging fans for their services or products (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (53)

**Negative impacting Sport performance**

…When you are losing most of your best players in terms its effect on the league is about the competition in the league, all the star players are leaving and so the quality of football on display is lower (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (54)

It takes the excitement of the league away because the good players have migrated (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (55)

It has affected the standard of the league. The clubs are unable to compete with foreign clubs in continental competitions and even among themselves in domestic competitions it is really difficult. It is a big challenge for the league (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (56)

We have had times in our history when our local players have played at the national level and did extremely well and sometimes when these so called professional players come down to play for the national teams, they have to sit on the bench because we had better alternatives in the local players. But currently we don’t because we don’t have a competitive league (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (57)

**Negatively impacting players’ careers**

When you are losing most of your best players; sometimes these players do not even mature and they leave (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (58)

Because it is uncontrolled even the very young ones are moving out so it is affecting the smooth development of individual talents…. What is happening is that even some of the young ones without going through the windmill and who are still on the learning curve migrate. So some of them they don’t even complete any development process and when they go to Europe they are unable to make it to the first team so some are reduced to bench warming. So it actually thwarts or inhibits their full development
Even with the new players who are yet to develop, they are ready to go out. The problem is that you have players who are not ready for the game in Europe but they are ready to move out… (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (60)

**Negative impacts on national team**

It does affect the national team in a way that if it is not an official match sanctioned by CAF or FIFA, the foreign clubs might not want to release their players (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (61)

But seriously, it has affected the junior national teams. Talk of the Under 17s, Under 20s and the Under 23s. Just that the under 23s those playing for the senior national team the Black Stars some of these players can play for the Under 23s by virtue of their ages. But with the junior national teams seriously for almost three years now, Ghana is not making any impact in any competition that the nation has engaged in and I think it is because of the early departure of some of the youngsters. It is affecting the junior national teams because we don’t have enough time to camp the players in this country (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (62)

But there are some that we don’t get them because not all competitions that the clubs that the players are playing are obliged to release the players. So in a way i must say it helps in a way but it does not help in a way because it is not all competitions that you can get all your players that have travelled outside (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (63)

Last year for instance, Ghana couldn’t do well in the under 20 under 23 international competitions, we were eliminated from the preliminaries. Ghana which was the first black African country to have won the world under 20 World Cup competitions could not even go past the preliminaries. It has affected our performance greatly. Because the players who should have been here to start as the nucleus for the under 20 national team are not there. When you are playing the elimination or qualifying series, you need players who are here and who can be relied upon to play and win matches. It’s not every match that you need to get players from outside there because the outside teams will not release the players most of the time and so you need to get those who are here to play the preliminaries before they are blended them with those outside. But because everybody leaves, you [the country] are left with makeshift teams here and they are not able to do well in the preliminaries and so you don’t expect your team to go beyond the preliminary stage (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (64)

It will be easier to assemble players and then have longer camping periods to prepare for games when the players are in your jurisdiction. Because you can decide to break the league, you can decide to suspend the league; you can even decide to negotiate with clubs irrespective of the FIFA rules on the release of players but it’s easier to deal with clubs within your jurisdiction but if the players are playing outside your jurisdiction, it becomes very difficult. For many coaches,
the inability to be able to have access to players and be able to work with them for a longer period is a challenge. There is the problem for these coaches but because that is the reality, the coaches try as much as possible to plan around the fact that you can only get your players for certain limited period. But I must say that the more players you have playing in your jurisdiction that is especially for the junior national teams, the better it helps for camping. So it is actually a paradox, if you are dealing with the juvenile teams and the youth teams, it looks like you are better off if you have a lot of them here. If you dealing with the senior team it looks like you are better off if you have players playing good quality teams and clubs in Europe (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (65)

When it comes to the age group competitions whose assignments are not affected by the synchronized calendar of FIFA sometimes it becomes difficult for the players to come and play during national assignments (MR1, personal communication, July 4, 2011). (66)
Appendix M:

Comments on Suggested Initiatives

Increased player remuneration

The players are the key issues here, they are the subject of our discussion here and so what we all need to do is to make sure we come out with packages that will encourage them to stay. And doing that will not be easy as it will not come as something in one day; it will have to be conscientiously and systematically approached and worked towards. So I will say that the challenge or the onus is still on the clubs to be able to pay the players well…(CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (67)

It’s all about finances. When we talk of us trying to retain our best players, we have to pay them well in terms of their salary, allowance, winning bonus and their contract sum of money. If we should be able to pay players about $1000 a month and pay them $500 as winning bonus, I don’t think these players will be eager to travel outside. But it’s a very difficult situation, all borders on finance. So if we should try to pay them well for them to live comfortably I don’t think the players will leave (FR1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (68)

I think the key part here is about finance. Because I am sure that if we are able to maybe pay players from $4,000 or $5,000 or so a month, I am sure a lot of players will not want to leave unless for those mega contracts…. I guess that the bottom-line is finance. So for me the key issue here is about finance paying them better, improving the facilities improving player welfare in terms of their housing, their transportation, dieting, their Medicare, social security, pension and all those things. I guess that when there is that kind of security, players will want to relax and only go out when there is a very sweet deal (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (69)

Professionalizing club and league administration

So you will have to get more sponsors …as a league to be lucrative and…getting more sponsors … not easy… so you have to run your team more professional (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 201). (70)

The clubs themselves we have asked them to put their house in order and practice good business ethics; they should have you know proper records, proper accounting records, have a club secretariat …. (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (71)

So we need to understand that we must run our clubs professionally. If we run our clubs professionally it will become attractive for sponsors. We can then begin to define revenue streams. Now all those players… we may not be able to pay them salaries that compete with the European teams like Arsenal or Manchester United but we might probably to compete with let’s say Anderlecht or some of the Saudi Arabia teams or even the Egyptian teams. Egypt is a clear example of how it’s done. Egyptian teams like Zamalek, they attract good talents from around the world and they are no better than us. But then the difference is that they
ran their clubs professionally and the clubs have become so attractive to businesses….so companies are paying to be associated with these clubs and their associations and clubs can have enough revenue to pay these guys [players] as good as probably they would have been paid in you know a not so big a club in say English league, Spanish league or probably a German league. So for me, that is the crust of the matter, if we ran the league and clubs professionally, then obviously we can move forward. Professionalism! That’s all. Professionalism! We need to understand that we are competing not just in Ghana for these talents…..we are competing with clubs around the world (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (72)

Positive media coverage

The media need to give coverage to the local club’s right from training, from their matches…. post-match interviews. They [media] need to go beyond what they are doing to encourage sponsors to come into our league. The media should also be encouraged to create “imaginary” rivalry in our games….these things the media can come out and do it in a very positive…(CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (73)

So the media have a role to play because if they are always going to concentrate on the negatives….. The media themselves are part of the problem but they can also be part of the solution if they provide positive coverage to the local league (CA3, personal communication, August 1, 2011). (74)

The appeal I will make to the local press is to focus more on the on the local league than on the external leagues so that the corporate bodies in Ghana who sponsor the league might get the required or requisite mileage to advertise themselves and see it important to sponsor the league more than stay away from it [league] because they think that they are not being projected as needed better (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (75)

I think that the media, because the medium is very powerful, it reaches people everywhere, they also need to help the football association in the country by promoting the local matches (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (76)

Increased infrastructure

When we provide facilities, good pitches enough equipment ….players will feel at home. But when a players are playing on a grassless pitches, without adequate equipment and the right technical personnel, and it doesn’t entice them to stay (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011). (77)

Beyond that you could also move into other areas of infrastructure and probably build a more competent youth side so that you could churn out a lot more players who will be taking over from the older ones (CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (78)

The other factors are that we need nice pitches, nice stands, spectators being able to sit in comfort, those are things that will help
drive participation (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (79)

Legislation for local players

I think GFA should be able to make sure that there is a regulation that at least if you [player] are playing in the league, whether in the division one league or two, you [player] won’t be permitted to move outside until after serving your full contract of three or four years...(CA2, personal communication, June 29, 2011). (80)

I think that if a law can be passed to deter players from not leaving the country too early.... this law can even say that a player has to play for the national under 20 or has to be in the Premiership or you have to have played for a certain period of time say one to three years before the player can leave. I believe that the FA congress which is the highest decision making body of the football association can meet as football administrators and pass a law on this law on the exodus of players. I personally think when a player emerges and is not at a certain age let’s say 20 years, you should not be allowed to leave the country…. Maybe the football association has to pass a law to say a player has to play for either three years or up to a certain age before the player can leave. So I think that the football association at congress pass certain laws to let the players at least stay for a while in the country and I think it will help a lot (FR2, personal communication, June 15, 2011). (81)

Player education

Because most people[players] go out there and sign contracts when they don’t know what it entails, I will suggest we do some education to equip these players so that at least they know what they doing when they go out there (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 201). (82)

Some of the players also want to go out by themselves and don’t care whether they get abroad and don’t play again….There is the need for a lot of education that when you move out of Ghana it is not an automatic condition that you make money.... So young players must be educated to know that, sometimes if you persist in your country you can make it… (LA2, personal communication, July 5, 2011). (83)

Scheduling of games

We have to look at the timing of the English Premier League..... because most supporters in Africa now associate with a club in the EPL... so when you don’t schedule your games right and it coincides with some of the EPL games, obviously they [supporters] will go and watch the EPL game and they will leave the local game. So we have to schedule our games strategically, it is very important (CA1, personal communication, July 9, 201). (84)

Now we need to maybe find a way to change the days and times for our matches so that it doesn’t coincide with the English Premier League or Spanish La Liga or the popular European leagues (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (85)
Appendix N

Comments on In-Progress initiatives

Infrastructure

In the area of infrastructure whilst the government is helping, the clubs themselves have been advised to also do something. So now Kotoko has their own training pitch now they are even going to construct changing rooms, Accra Hearts of Oak also have their own training pitch, Liberty Professionals have their own and more of the clubs are getting started (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (86)

Stock exchange

Accra Hearts of Oak is trying to go public. By September 29, I can assure you we [club] would have finished our floatation of shares. Certificates have been issued out to shareholders, and Hearts of Oak will be on the stock exchange whereby we are expecting to make enough money to even buy players from outside the continent if possible (FR1, personal communication, June 24, 2011). (87)

Consistent game scheduling and improved package

Recently we synchronized our league with the league in Europe and it has helped well (CA4, personal communication, August 22, 2011) (88)

….. And now in the Premier League we have the reserve side that is the under 20 who play before the league games, we are even planning to have the under 17 so that we will have more younger players who will be playing in the reserve side so immediately those matured stars go we will have a replacement in a short time so that the excitement that comes with the league will be maintained (LA1, personal communication, June 27, 2011) (89)

we need to look seriously and that’s what the FA is doing; creating the under 20 and under 17 leagues for all the Premier League clubs so that their players are more ready to step in as others leave and by they playing curtain raisers, they are also exposed to the fans so that the fans can also know that there are quality players who can always step in the shoes of those who are going out (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (90)

Commercial TV

We also talked about quality commercial television where we will do things that will make the league more attractive. These are issues that the FA is working around (MR2, personal communication, June 27, 2011). (91)

Certification of players

And so long as you are affiliated to GFA and for which reason you have been given this license, the rule is that you are willing to go, yes we will give you the permission to go but then, at least play for a year or two for your club here before you leave (LA3, personal communication, June 22, 2011). (92)
Professionalism

Kotoko currently has Dr. K. K. Sarpong a very well respected corporate person who is now their chairman. So there are attempts in some clubs to run them professionally (SP2, personal communication, August 18, 2011). (93)
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