

STEROIDS IN SPORT: ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES TO PROMOTE LIBERAL EDUCATION THROUGH SPORT

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Context

A recent report entitled *Greater Expectations: The Commitment to Quality as a Nation Goes to School* calls for radical reform in education in order to align itself with twenty-first century needs (AACU, 2002). According to the report, the direction this reform should take involves focusing on learning that empowers and informs students to become intentional, adaptable, responsible, and self-directed learners and practitioners, capable of integrating knowledge from a variety of sources to effectively and ethically identify and solve problems in order to thrive in a complex world. In short, the report calls for universities and professors to become effective at merging the goals of the disciplines with the goals of traditional liberal education so that students, irrespective of their discipline, are engaged in a practical liberal education.

Merging the objectives of a traditional liberal education with the development of professional intellect (discipline-based) in students redefines the teacher-student relationship, and can be considered practical liberal education. A *Harvard Business Review* article by Quinn, Anderson, and Finkelstein (1996) provides a cogent model of a conceptual framework for developing sport management professionals for the 21st century for sport educators. They identified four levels comprising “professional intellect” of ascending importance they view as necessary to be developed in enterprises (teams, agencies, organizations) for economic competitiveness in a global economy.

These levels of knowledge are:

- 1) *Cognitive knowledge* (know-what) - the basic mastery of a discipline that professionals achieve through extensive training and certification, which must be updated constantly. This knowledge is essential, but usually far from sufficient, for commercial success
- 2) *Advanced skills* (know-how) translate “book learning” into effective execution. The ability to apply the rules of a discipline to complex real-world problems is the most widespread value-creating professional skill level
- 3) *Systems understanding* (know-why) is deep knowledge of the web of cause-and-effect relationships underlying a discipline. It permits professionals to move beyond the execution of tasks to solve larger and more complex problems - and to create extraordinary value, and
- 4) *Self-motivated creativity* (care-why) consists of will, motivation, and adaptability for success. Hogan and Santomier (1997) recommended that faculty staff in business and sport management should attempt to promote these levels of knowledge in individuals (not just enterprises) and that because of their importance in sport and medicine, professional ethics be subsumed under the category of self-motivated creativity (care-why).

Project/Partners

Using sport-based problems to promote a practical liberal education in students requires creating a dynamic teacher-student relationship. This involves a shift from the traditional instructional paradigm (universities exist to transmit information) to a learning paradigm (universities exist to produce learning). The learning paradigm (Quinn et al, 1996) focuses on a noetic (pertaining to the intellect) partnership between teachers and students, where the role of the teacher changes from primarily expert lecturer to designer of learning methods and environments, collaborator in and empowerer of learning, and where the role of the student changes from passive recipient of information to active participant in his/her learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

The idea of viewing sport management education in the light of practical liberal education will be discussed, and a means to facilitate such an end will be identified. Specifically, a problem-based learning or PBL method (McMaster University, 1985), involving the issue of using steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs in sport, will be used to demonstrate how educators can use complex

sport-based issues and problems to promote educational objectives related to the discipline of sport management and to promote a practical liberal education, both contributing to the development of 'professional intellect.'

Using PBL, an amalgam of two newspaper pieces on steroids in sport (Lawmakers 2005; Leonhardt, 2005) was progressively disclosed to participants. Participants were asked to identify issues related to the disclosures. Issues such as, what are the costs-benefits of steroid use in sport? what are the ethical issues? what are current testing procedures used on athletes? and what is the efficacy of such procedures? how does the government plan to intervene on steroid use? what are the current laws related to steroid use? how are athletes socialized into taking steroids? what is the mechanism for steroid provision? will be brought out. Participants are then asked to research answers to the major issues brought out in the disclosures, and to share them with their fellow participants. Lessons students learn from this approach relate to self-directed learning, ethical dialogue improvement, critical thinking, communication skills, systems awareness, and how to be empowered to learn.

Results and Discussion/Implications

Sport management educators will understand the concepts of a dynamic relationship between traditional liberal education objectives, key elements of professional intellect, practical liberal education objectives, and problem-based learning (PBL). The development and implementation of PBL strategies to explore health, business, ethical, performance, intellectual, and international issues related to sport will be understood. Key conceptual issues related specifically to the use of steroids and other performance enhancing drugs and their implications for sport managers will be discussed. In addition, it will be pointed out that the aforementioned PBL contextual framework is a method that sport management educators can use with students, in a dynamic noetic partnership, to promote the development of liberal education and content education objectives; in short, to teach for practical liberal education outcomes.

References

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