

Comparative analysis of sport management programmes in the United States and the United Kingdom

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Aim of paper and research questions

What are the similarities and differences faced in sport management education in the US and UK?

The aim of this paper is to: (1) provide an overview of the development of UK sport management programmes in comparison to the US, (2) provide a comparative snapshot of UK and US sport management programmes, including admissions requirements and faculty profiles, and (3) identify key similarities and differences between UK and US provision of sport management education.

Literature review

According to Costa (2005) sport management defined itself as a discipline in the middle of the 1980s as signalled by the founding of the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) in 1985. Over the last 3 decades, the field has grown significantly with professional associations having been established in Europe (European Association of Sport Management, founded in 1993), Australia and New Zealand (The Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand was founded in November 1995), more recently in Asia (Asian Association of Sport Management, founded in 2002) and Latin America (Latin American Sport Management Association, founded in 2009). The number of Sport Management focussed educational programmes has also grown, specifically in the US, Australia and Europe, with emerging markets in Asia and South America.

Key issues pertaining to the provision of Sport Management Education include but are not limited to; the appropriate academic home for Sport Management, recognised accreditation (Fielding et al., 1991; Jones et al., 2008), academic profiles of faculty members (Skinner & Gilbert, 2007; Jones et al., 2008), research focus (Weese, 1995; Cuneen & Parks, 1997; Chaplin, 2006; Light & Dixon, 2007), and curricular content (NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Skinner & Gilbert, 2007). Several studies have reviewed the provision of Sport Management education from a national perspective (Li et al., 2002; Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997; Jones et al., 2008) but to the authors knowledge there has yet to be any international comparative studies.

Research design and proposed data analysis

Following on from research conducted by Jones et al., (2008) a survey based method was utilised. The original survey used in Jones et al. (2008) was adapted slightly (terminology and phrasing) for a UK audience but as far as possible questions remained the same to aid comparison between the data sets. Data was collected separately in the US and UK and both research projects underwent internal institutional ethics scrutiny.

The survey was designed to collect the following data: (1) the programme profile (i.e. programme name, programme location, programme size), (2) admittance requirements, and (3) faculty profile (i.e. number of staff, faculty research interests and scholarly activities).

US data collection:

Universities offering Sport Management undergraduate degree programmes were identified (N = 274) from (1) the Dictionary of Sport Management Programmes (Alsop & Fuller, 2000), (2) the NCAA Handbook (2005) list of Sport Management programmes and (3) internet search including NASSM, NASPE and EASM websites. A modified random sample (N = 137) was then identified, with 50 usable data sets returned.

UK data collection:

The Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) 'course search' tool was used to identify participants providing undergraduate degree (BA and BSc) programmes in Sport Management. A subject search was carried out using the term 'sport management' (N = 156 programmes), including foundation degrees and joint honours. For the purpose of this study only single honours BA or BSc programmes were required, and to avoid repetition of results, only one programme per institute was selected (N = 40 programmes). Initial contact with identified participants has been positive and a high percentage response rate is anticipated.

Discussion of progress

Descriptive statistical analysis of US data has already been completed. Descriptive statistical analysis of UK data will be completed by June. Comparative analysis will be completed by July 2009.

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