

THE EDUCATION OF SPORTS MANAGERS IN THE NETHERLANDS - CONNECTING SPORTS PRACTICES AND SPORTS INSTITUTES

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Context

The world of sports is changing in the Netherlands, which historically has had a strong and well-developed culture of sports clubs and associations, where people play in an environment of social coherence. At board and technical staff level, positions are often filled by volunteers. Therefore, organized sports is not only widespread (60% of the Dutch population plays organized sports) but also very economical. But sports clubs and associations are increasingly faced by a decline in membership due to an increasing need for flexible, individual programmes and possibilities for personal choices, quality and service. The old clubs and associations cannot meet these demands. In the changing world of sports there is a need for professionals who develop and initiate new concepts and ideas, creating new positions, functions and jobs. What does this mean for sports managers, and their education?

Project/Partners

The project is about creating a brand new Institute for educating sports managers and entrepreneurs, who will boost the world of sports. It was started in 2000 by the Academy for Sports and Physical Education, a department of the University of Amsterdam, and cooperates with the Ministry of Education and of Sport, with the National Olympic Committee, and with numerous professionals.

Introducing Sports, Management & Business

The foundation of the Institute's curriculum is a vision of sport, distinguishing between *Sportspractises* and *Sportsinstitutions*. Its basic view is that *sportsinstitutions* are justified by the practise of sports and not the other way around. A sports professional needs not only be able to think *about* sports, but (s)he needs to be able to think (and act) from *within*. Sport itself is a practise. To survive, to sustain themselves and to develop, practises need support and protection from institutions. Soccer, philosophy, science and health care are all practises. The IOC, the UEFA, etc. are, on the other hand, institutions just like universities and hospitals. Institutions are run and administered by board members and managers, by administrators and financial advisers. Their primary task is to create conditions and circumstances in which the intrinsic goal of the practises can be realised. On the other hand, institutions necessarily, are also interested in realising extrinsic goals. Within society institutions should show, subscribe to and support the practises for which they stand. This way, the institutions are focussed on obtaining power, status and financial resources. Problems arise when certain extrinsic goals are over-emphasized and over-valued in a way that harms the intrinsic goal of sports. When this occurs, one can speak of "the instrumentalisation of sports."

Sports, Management & Business; "Passion for sports"

The Sports, Management & Business themes educate multi-talented professionals who want and are able to keep a protective balance between *Sportspractises* and the *Sportsinstitutes*. The graduates connect with the sports organisation and their members, but they are also a link between sports organisations and their surroundings. The graduates have *passion for sports* and master the language of both the athlete, the trainer and the coach, but also of the members of the club, clients, volunteers, board members, directors, sponsors, policymakers etc.

Consequences for the education of sports managers The person who likes to be part of the society of sports, needs to have an 'internal understanding' and the requisite knowledge and expertise. All students therefore obtain a trainer-coach permit at the second highest level in the Dutch qualifications structure. The young professionals also need to have the necessary competences in the framework of *Sportsinstitutes*, keywords being policy making, finances, organisational theories and marketing. Combining these two sets of competences is the heart and soul of the education taught at the department of Sports, Management & Business.

Results

Numbers: Since 2002 460 students have enrolled at Sports, Management & Business; interest is very high; with 3 times as many applicants as can be placed. There is no shortage of internships, and 15% of the students want to go abroad. for this. The first graduates will enter the market in August 2006.

A new educational concept with a curriculum that is based on competences that are necessary in the professional world of a sports manager and/or sports entrepreneur. The curriculum is closely linked to the professional field of sports, seen from the viewpoint of sports and the athlete. The professional field is “real” and the theory is backed up by the reality experienced during internships.

Playing sports and theory about sports During the first 2 years the students learn about and practise 18 different types of sport, which serves three purposes: 1) the students learn the ‘ins and outs’ of sports; 2) the education explicitly uses necessary competences ‘picked up on the sports field’ - team sports, for example, are linked to managing teams, dance is linked to personal performance, and endurance sports to discipline and courage; and 3) through theory, coaching and self-reflection, the experiences of playing sports together are combined with personal qualities and competences in the field of management and business. Coaching, sports psychology and sports philosophy are a logical integral part of the curriculum. During the last 2 years the students obtain a trainer-coach permit in one or two sports of their choice.

Expertise in the field of marketing, policy making, organisational theory and finance are embedded in the curriculum Knowledge about marketing, policy making, organisational theories and finance are a necessary base in the curriculum. A substantial part of the curriculum focuses on these aspects. These aspects are applied to the world of sports and serve as a cornerstone for assignments during the internships of the students.

Profile Based on his/her own interests, capacity and development a student can make his/her own profile by making choices regarding certain subjects, minors and/or (international) internships.

Vision on sports Graduates will have a strong initiating role in their future work, so they are stimulated during the course of Sports, Management & Business to form their own vision on sports and sports development. The important link between Sportspractises and Sportsinstitutes has a crucial role within Sports, Management & Business at the University of Amsterdam.

Discussion / implications

The graduates of today are the policy makers of tomorrow, so institutes offering Sports Management education have a responsibility to develop the direction of sports in the future. They should challenge their students to develop a mission and vision standing balancing Sportspractises and Sportsinstitutes.

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