

# TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION & SPORT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

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## Context

In analyzing current trends, policy strategies and future scenarios in cross-border Higher Education, Larsen, Momii and Vincent-Lancrin (2004) suggested that it is a developing component of the broader internationalization of Higher Education. Traditionally viewed as the 'internationalization of the curriculum', helping students to 'develop intercultural awareness without leaving home,' HE has morphed into a transnational activity. Similarly Vincent-Lancrin (2005:20) suggested that "cross-border education has the potential to be an effective capacity development tool for tertiary education systems." In a recent article in *The Economist* it was commented that 2 million university students, about 2% of the world's total, is studying outside their own country. It is clear that over the last two decades the development of transnational HE has risen exponentially. Such a situation provides both challenges and benefits to an institution and its programmes.

In many respects Europe is at the forefront of innovative HE thinking. With the aim of establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010 through the Bologna process, European sport management is ideally situated to take advantage of borderless education. The intent is to create a zone within Europe where academics and students can move freely and have their qualifications mutually recognized. Embedded in this philosophy are elements such as unified degree structures; systems for credit transfer and accumulation; increased mobility, and cooperative quality assurance. Moreover if this process is appropriated correctly, and industry collaboration undertaken, this educational strategy has a dramatic implication for national sport.

Using the Australia context for exemplification, a number of agencies have provided advice for the developing national sport management education. *Shaping Up: A Review of Commonwealth Involvement in Sport and Recreation in Australia* (1999); *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability: A More Active Australia* (2001); *Game Plan* (2006); *Sport and Leisure Industry Strategic Plan* (2001); Australian Sports Commission *2002-2005 Strategic Plan* (2002), and the *Report of the Independent Soccer Review Committee into the Structure, Governance & Management of Soccer in Australia* (2003) have all recommended that an increased emphasis on education and training is needed to strengthen the elements that underpin the development of the industry. It is suggested that these elements should include skill acquisition across the functional areas of business including planning, finance, administration, technology and marketing.

## Project

This paper discusses the potential impact on national sport via the adaptation of an educational strategy embedded in Bologna, and how such a strategy informed by industry is beneficial to all stakeholders; the student, the institution and national sport management. Through analysis of the literature related to competency requirements for the Australian sport industry and, by adopting an unencumbered delivery approach, it is possible to establish a new paradigm for delivering sport management programmes. Such a paradigm is not limited by institutional capacity or self-interest. This paper will use two case studies to reflect this process.

## Results

The first case study was the Hellenic Masters of Management in a sport management programme delivered at UTS in Sydney, Australia during 1999-2000. This unique programme was a collaborative relationship between the Ministry of Culture (Greece), the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) and the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). The programme had academic input from five Greek academics, one Canadian academic, eight Australian academics and industry representatives, who collectively delivered the twelve subjects. Although this was a very rudimentary example of borderless education, in fact it was never termed as such, but nevertheless provides the basis for extrapolating the process. By constructing and detailing a scenario where

students can tailor their programs to specific academic expertise, this paper segues from the actual to the possible.

The second case study was the creation of a potential new sport management program at UTS; one that is philosophically located in the Bologna process, constructed through a collaborative process with the Australian sport industry and delivered using specific expertise within the sport management academy. The outcome would be a repositioning of a degree from one currently constructed around the expertise of the faculty to one that has responded to industry input and embraced the Bologna process. In the end what would be created would be a degree more rigorous, more creative and ultimately far more relevant.

### **Discussion/Implications**

Ultimately a student who takes courses/subjects/classes from leading sport management academics and immerses themselves in the diversity of sport delivery systems while undertaking such highly specialized academic programmes, can provide a management or consultant service that is truly embedded in international best practice and informed by the leading thinkers in their field. By adopting such a collaborative focus in establishing their sport management programmes, a programme/university can concentrate on delivering what they are excellent at, while relying on clearly defined and established partners, both industry and academic to do the same. Such a situation benefits the individuals, those they establish professional relationships with and ultimately the state of national sport.

### **References**

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