

Preparing Undergraduate Students for the Grass Roots of the Sport Management Practice: Sport Club Governance Data as a Proxy for Defining Curricula

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Aim

the aim of contributing to the ongoing discussion about the composition and content of sport management education, this paper offers sport management faculty tools that can be used to assess the practical relevance of curricula in undergraduate sport management programmes. By practical relevance, we refer to the very pragmatic notion of education preparing for common workplace tasks, but importantly also to the potential for sport management education to contribute to a sustainable development of the sport management practice in terms of ethical issues and social responsibilities (Shaw, Wolfe & Frisby, 2011). Building on the ‘Tuning’ conceptualization of competence (e.g., Kehm, 2010), and drawing on observation data of sport management practice, we address the following research question: “What competencies are needed to a) manage and b) develop sport organizations’ operations?”

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Starting out with Jamieson’s (1987) introduction of pedagogical issues to the broader sport management debate, curricular models for sport management education have been discussed in the literature since the late 1980’s. The NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, European standards, the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation, and the creation of the Sport Management Education Journal, has subsequently established sport management education as a scientific field of inquiry of its own. This has further propelled the discussion around a very basic question: how and on what bases should a sport management curriculum be constructed? This study is situated in and seek to contribute to this discussion by drawing on the works of DeLuca and Braunstein-Minkove (2016) and Yiamouyiannis et al. (2013), who have focused particularly on the industry-needs – curriculum nexus. In doing so, we argue that the composition and content of sport management education needs to be based on empirical observations of the sport management practice.

Research Design and Data Analysis

In order to extend the current literature, we argue that actual observations of practitioners’ mundane, ordinary activities can complement the subjective views (on appropriate curricula) of industry executives and sport industry professionals (Petersen & Pierce, 2009) in assessing the practical relevance of curricula. Therefore, we rely empirically on video recordings of two Swedish sport clubs’ board meetings over the course of one year. The in total 33 hours of video data are used to map the operations of the arguably most common type of sport organization worldwide.

The initial steps of data analysis resulted in a list describing the content of each of the 54 issues that were treated by the two boards. This list was thereafter used as a basis to provide answers to the following analytical questions: What (1) knowledge and understanding, (2)

skills and abilities, and (3) values and attitudes (e.g., Kehm, 2010) are needed to a) manage and b) develop such issues.

Results and Discussion

Ongoing analyses show how the management of a non-profit, voluntary and membership-based sport clubs requires a very broad competence portfolio, spanning from what appears to be the very practical business of arranging the club anniversary to what arguably might be considered to be issues of a more strategic character – the formation of a farm club. At the time of writing the content of the 54 issues discussed during the board meetings of the two clubs is to be put under scrutiny to show what knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, values and attitudes are required to manage and develop sport organizations' operations.

Conclusions and Implications

At the conference, these results will be discussed in relation to existing curricular models, pointing to potential differences. Making use of the 'grounded' character of our observation data, we will take a critical stance towards prevailing guidelines, recommendations and accreditations and centre our argumentation at the potential evidence of a need of a more practice-based approach to sport management curriculum.

References

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