

Conceptual Framework for Understanding Sport Management Ethics

Amukela Gwebu, University of Idaho
Justin Barnes, University of Idaho
Peter VanMullem, University of Idaho
Errin Reese, University of Idaho
Dr Sharon Stoll, University of Idaho (Advisor)

Session 6: Ethics Presentation (25-minute)

Thursday, May 31, 2007

1:00 PM - 1:25 PM

Despite the general understanding that sport law and sport ethics overlap, sport they are two distinct fields. Sport management pedagogy has relied heavily on teaching the governance and legal aspects of sport to cover ethics (De Sensi and Rosenberg, 2003, p, 233). Research shows that managers typically (stage 3 moral development) do not have the moral reasoning tools to formulate good decisions regarding ethical dilemmas/issues they confront in the sport management context compared to (stage 4 moral development) a dilemma outside of business (Colby & Kohlberg 1987; Weber, 1999; Stoll & Beller, 2003). Specifically, many managers lack the formal character education background in teleological or deontological ethical theory necessary to navigate these ethical issues. We submit that many athletic managers and administrators function at a lower level of moral reasoning necessary to understand the ethical creed or the guiding philosophy of the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM).

Using the college programs and university sport management programs in the United States and Canada listed on the NASSM website, Rudd (2006) notes that: 57 out of 149 (38%) bachelor programs, 35 out of 110 (32%) master programs, and 3 out of 17 (18%) doctoral programs require students to take ethics courses. Adhering to business law and the fear of sanctions can, at best alter overt behavior, not cognitive structure. Managers and administrators often make the wrong decision when confronted with a choice between social values and moral values (De George, 1999; Morris, 1997). As evidenced by Ford Motor Company's defective Pinto, illegal accounting practices by E. F. Hutton, and Salmon Brothers (Sims, 1994). Further evidence is found in the fraudulent Enron accounting reports ("Enron Scandal,"2002), and mutual fund abuses by Morgan Stanley (Lash, 2003). The philosophy guiding the NASSM ethical creed see Malloy et. al in the International Journal of Sport Management for a review of these guidelines, must have meaning and relevance for sport managers and administrators.

The methodology outlined in this paper is structured to clarify the distinction between the moral and the legislative so that the guiding philosophy of NASSM in sport management has cultural relevance and meaning for sport managers and administrators. We propose that sport management programs should include a cognitive moral reasoning course to provide sport managers with adequate moral reasoning tools to make thoughtful informed decisions regarding ethical dilemmas. Sport philosophers argue that practitioners need to think critically and morally about the ethical ramifications of their management philosophies (De Sensi& Rosenberg, 2003; Lumpkin, Stoll & Beller, 2003; Maloy & Zakus, 1995).We propose an ethics method with a reflective orientation, engaging both open and silent dialogue, and pondering questions mirroring the value structure of the NASSM. Examples of this methodology will be offered as well as data on the success of this type of methodology in diverse populations, including coaches, athletes, and athletic trainers.