

## **Sport Management at the Millennium: A Defining Moment**

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The millennium has presented the world with the opportunity to evaluate progress up to this point in time. Many have used this as a way to look back at achievements, disappointments, brilliance, and mistakes. In addition, it has offered a chance to reevaluate predictions for the future, make adjustments in goals, question ego, and ponder the state of inequitable human rights.

As the title of my address suggests, I believe we in sport management academia are presented with an opportunity to evaluate our progress. First, it is the eve of the millennium. And second, the North American Society for Sport Management is 15 years old as of this conference. I see these marks of time as an opportunity to look at our past, analyze our current status, and to envision the possibilities of our future. I believe it is now time to critically examine who we are and where we are in reality in relation to who and where we think we might be. Moreover, I propose that we start this examination now and use the first five to ten years of the millennium as an era for critical examination.

In this address, I will put forth my evaluation of the past, present, and future of sport management as a field of study and issue challenges for your discussion. The focus of my address is limited to issues that I call identification markers—those issues and factors that define, describe, and create an identification for sport management as a field of study. Additionally, I will challenge what is called “box thinking,” which I define, for the purposes of this paper, as the passive acceptance of constructed definitions and positions about sport management and its content without question or analysis. Box thinking is dangerous. It stifles critical examination and growth that can free us to move and progress.

My perspective is derived from observation of sport management academia for 16 years as a university professor, some limited study of the historical development of sport management, experience with different aspects of sport management as a field of study, analysis of the literature, and 35 years as a sportswoman and athlete participating and working in the sport industry. Moreover, my perspective

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is informed by the works of several Zeigler scholars before me who analyzed the field at their time, a wealth of literature (relative to 15 years ago), and numerous sport management academics of all ages from whom I have learned.

### ***Sport Management as a Field of Study***

Beginning with the question of what constitutes a field of study, sport management can be measured against the answer. Among other things, a field of study is recognized as consisting of

1. a body of knowledge and literature in relation to theory and practice,
2. professionals—those who educate, those who pursue research, those who practice,
3. professional organizations dedicated to the advancement of the field,
4. professional preparation, and, dare I say it,
5. credibility.

#### **A Body of Knowledge and Literature in Relation to Theory and Practice**

A field of study cannot exist without a body of knowledge and literature regarding the theory and practice of the field. A body of knowledge can be evaluated based on its (a) practical and theoretical literature, (b) all directly and indirectly related literature, (c) agreement of content, and (d) depth and breadth of content.

**Practical and theoretical literature.** Sport management practitioner literature has existed for many years. There are numerous publications that target the practitioner in relation to career and industry segment. Some examples are *Sports Travel Magazine*, the *NCAA News*, *Boating Dealer*, *Club Business Industry*, *Sporting Goods Dealer*, and *Team Marketing Report*. The practitioner literature addresses such topics as marketing and business ideas, job related issues, customer service, and annual market reports. As each industry segment expands, so too will their literature.

Sport management theoretical literature is found primarily in the academic literature, is comprised of scholarly journals and textbooks, and is relatively young. In the past, it consisted of those books written about the organization and administration of physical education and athletics (Paton, 1987; Ziegler, 1987). Today, the literature has grown in number and expanded in content. For example, there are now 16 journals of which I am aware, 13 of which reside primarily in North America. (Included are five sport law journals, the *Journal of Sport Management*, the *European Journal of Sport Management*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, the *Cyber Journal of Sport Marketing*, *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, *International Journal of Sport Management*, *Journal of Sport Economics*, *Journal of Sport Tourism*, *International Sport Journal*, *Sport Management Review* (Australia), and the *Korean Journal of Sport Management*.)

Sport management textbooks have also proliferated (Mahony & Pitts, 1998). The first books with sport management titles were all inclusive books. They included

individual chapters on the different content areas. Today, there are complete books on the individual content areas. In the future, there will be more.

**Related literature.** Related literature refers to the literature related to sport management and that is used as conceptual frameworks and foundational matter. For sport management, this includes such fields as recreation administration, dance, leisure, sport tourism, sociology, communication, marketing, finance, and law. In the past, when there were no sport management journals or books, we relied heavily on the literature in these fields. Moreover, we have used these fields to develop the sport management literature. This is common among developing fields and influences the credibility of the literature. For instance, those of us in sport marketing use marketing as a conceptual framework. From this, definitions, models, fundamentals, and theories of sport marketing are developed.

In the future, I hope to see a consistent use of foundational works as conceptual frameworks in the sport management literature. It is both necessary and wise.

**Agreement of content.** In relation to the question of agreement of content, I find that there has not been agreement in two areas: how we define sport management and how we apply the definition. It appears as though there have been two schools of thought—one school is that sport management is managing sports; the other is that sport management is all management practice in all of the sport industry. What I also find, however, is that how we define sport management is slowly evolving and expanding beyond athletics administration or managing sports. When studies of the size and breadth of the industry appeared, such as the Wharton School studies in the mid-1980s, many started to broaden their scope of thinking to include more segments of the industry.

The curriculum standards discussions in the late 1980s and early 1990s helped, and today more definitions of sport industry and sport management are becoming more similar. Most of the literature, for example, quotes the recent work of Meek (1997) when defining and describing sport management and the depth and breadth of the sport industry. Descriptions will state that the sport industry is a multibillion dollar industry and that it is vast and varied. The description will include the information that the industry consists of participation sports as the largest segment, sporting goods as the second largest, sport management businesses, and so forth.

On the other hand, the application of the definition seems to stop at chapter one of the textbook or at the introduction of the research paper. Beyond chapter one, the preponderance of cases, examples, and discussions is heavily focused on college athletics and some professional sports. Therefore, I find that our definition of sport management has advanced, but the application of it appears to be lingering inside a box of thinking. I challenge us to question and analyze this practice.

**Depth and breadth of the literature.** Similarly, there is much room for improvement of the depth and breadth of our research literature. The lack of scope of our research has constantly been questioned by such sport management scholars as Parks, Paton, Olafson, Chelladurai, and Slack.<sup>1</sup> When one reads the totality of our literature, one gets the distinct impression that sport management is nothing more than the study of managing college athletics and some professional sports.

In 1987, Paton reported that our literature had a heavy focus on careers in higher education and college athletics, and he called for broadening the scope (Paton, 1987). Eight years later in 1995, Slack reported that 65% of the focus of the research in the *Journal of Sport Management* was on physical education and intercollegiate athletics (Slack, 1996).

Today, 5 years after Slack and 13 years after Paton, I find it disappointing to report to you that there has been little change. It is perhaps more disturbing to learn that when all other sport management journals and conference proceedings are evaluated, the focus is still heavily on college athletics. Additionally, sport management textbooks reveal the same heavy focus. Therefore, the concluding perception is that the study of sport management is still really nothing more than athletics administration.

I submit to you that we have no right to be surprised or insulted when someone proclaims that sport management is just a new and contemporary buzz word for athletics administration. If this is all we are, then we deserve the criticism we get. However, if we are preparing people for careers in the many different segments of this multibillion dollar industry, then we must move outside the box of focusing only on college athletics and a few professional sports. I am not suggesting that we ignore these, rather, I believe we have a responsibility to expand the scope of our research and add the other many areas of the sport industry. Therefore, in the near future, I challenge us to critically examine the state of our literature and begin the work toward expansion.

### **Sport Management Professionals: Those Who Educate, Those Who Pursue Research, Those Who Practice**

Historically, sport management as a practice has existed as early as any person who organized a sports or recreational activity or event, made equipment for or participated in a sport or recreational activity. Today, sport management is practiced in one of the largest industries. Therefore, there are numerous sport management practitioners with a plethora of opportunities. In the future, I believe this will continue.

In relation to those who teach and who pursue research, sport management is a yearling. It is ironic that one of the world's oldest professions is one of the world's newest fields of study. Sport management education is a fast growing area, especially in relation to the consistently increasing number of students and programs.

On the other hand, the number of faculty has not kept pace. This is somewhat understandable in an era of budget cuts, institutional downsizing, and reorganization. Regardless, it is incumbent upon us to do whatever we can to increase the number of full time sport management faculty in programs.

In the future, I believe there will be continued growth in the number of professionals in all three areas, but especially in academia. Already, for instance, the number of advertised faculty positions outnumber the number of doctoral graduates in sport management education.

### **Professional Organizations Dedicated to the Advancement of the Field**

Today, there are sport management professional associations for practitioners, educators, and researchers. For practitioners, numerous organizations exist. Such organizations as the National Federation of State High School Athletics Association, Sports Information Directors Association, International Racquet Sports Association, and the Snow Sports Industries of America exist to serve its members in many capacities.

For sport management academia, there is the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) and similar organizations in other countries. Although the construction of sport management as a field of study did not start with the establishment of the NASSM, this association has had a profound influence in its development. NASSM has served as a center of activity and a focal point around which those interested in sport management academia have gathered and have been able to share and grow as a family. NASSM has provided outlets for scholarly research and discussion through the *Journal of Sport Management* and the annual conference. In addition, NASSM has been a model for the start of similar organizations around the world. To the founders of NASSM as well as the pioneers before NASSM, such as Janet Parks, Bob Boucher, Gordon Olafson, Joy DeSensi, Earle Ziegler, Garth Paton, Beverly Zanger, Bonnie Parkhouse, Pakisnathan Chelladurai, and others, we owe a great debt. It is the establishment of NASSM and the work of the pioneers that have put sport management as a field of study on the academic map.

On the other hand, NASSM must confront some critical point decisions in relation to this question: Can NASSM continue to be the “everything” association and conference for all sport management content areas as those specializations develop? With the increase in the number of faculty, the need to expand the scope of our literature, and the need to develop the content areas, NASSM must examine its current status and future direction. For example, should NASSM consider expanding its current 3-day conference format to a 4- or 5-day format? Conference abstract rejection has reached nearly 50%. Should NASSM be turning so many people away while we are still developing? Of course, some rejections are justifiable. However, a certain number of rejections take place because of the limited 3-day conference format.

Additionally, perhaps NASSM could consider sponsoring journals and conferences in individual content areas, such as sport marketing and sport finance. I submit to you that it will be best for our field if those of us in the field produce such ventures as opposed to sitting back and allowing those in other fields to do this.

The individual content areas are in need of attention and development (Chelladurai, 1992; Mahony & Pitts, 1998). The addition of associations, conferences, and journals will provide the needed academic resources for growth.

### **Professional Preparation of Practitioners and the Professoriate**

A field of study will include professional preparation for practitioners and for its professoriate. Today, sport management has both. However, the history of

sport management education has not yet been studied and recorded, and this leaves us void of the true beginnings of our field.

**The history of sport management preparation.** In the past, sport management as a degree did not exist—or did it? How old is sport management as an academic area? There is no historical research on sport management in order to determine its academic roots.

The void of historical research has allowed a few claims to surface. For example, it has been stated that the first academic program in sport administration was established at Ohio University in 1966 (Mason, Higgins, & Owen, 1981). This statement has been repeated in several places in our literature even though there has been no historical research to either substantiate the claim or to discover our history (Parkhouse, 1996; Parks & Olafson, 1987; *SportsBusiness Journal*, 2000). On the other hand, there is evidence of a program nearly two decades before that. Between 1949 and 1959, Florida Southern University offered a sport management program approved by the State Department of Education of Florida titled “Baseball Business Administration” (Isaacs, 1964). The program was considered to be the first and only of its kind at the time, and it consisted of courses similar to today’s sport management curriculum standards. Which claim is correct?

The executive council of NASSM believes history is important. This is evidenced by the fact that NASSM established an official archives to preserve its history. The archives consist of such items as personal papers, records, budgets, and minutes, as well as a videotape library of past NASSM executive council members. In addition, at the request of the executive council to preserve more history, the *Journal of Sport Management* publishes the annual Ziegler Address.

Therefore, before the box closes on our thinking, I submit to you that the history of sport management academia is important and deserves the attention of NASSM and all of us. Perhaps NASSM could commission a study of the history of sport management and offer it in a special edition of the journal. Nevertheless, we should embark to discover our history.

**Practitioner preparation in the sport business industry.** In the 1980s, several studies by Parkhouse and others examined the state of sport management undergraduate and master’s programs. The studies revealed, for the most part, that sport management programs were primarily physical education curricula with a sport management title. The results of those studies encouraged us to critically examine the state of sport management education and served as the impetus to develop the curriculum standards.

Although no studies on the state of those programs have been conducted since then, we can use the curriculum standards and program review process as one measure. Today, 16 programs meet the curriculum standards of 1993 and another 12 are under review (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001). In the future, I believe more programs will be submitted for review. However, we are approaching the last few years which will mark approximately two decades during which there will have been no published research examining our curriculum. Before the box of time closes, I encourage us to conduct this important research.

**Professoriate preparation in sport management.** Today, there appears to be a healthy job market for sport management faculty. A simple count of faculty position advertisements shows that there have been over 50 faculty positions in sport management each year for the past 3 years. Yet, how many of these positions get filled? How many are carried over from the previous year because they went unfilled? And, perhaps more importantly, who is filling the positions? What is their background? Do they have doctoral degrees in sport management? If so, what is the state of that person's doctoral-granting program? If not, is it important that sport management faculty have achieved a doctoral degree in sport management? After all, the vast majority of these people will be expected to teach the undergraduate and master's sport management content according to the curriculum standards and to conduct sport management research. Therefore, if they do not have a degree in sport management, does this not negatively affect the growth and credibility of sport management? If anyone can teach sport management, why are we here? Why are we building a body of knowledge? And why do we have curriculum standards for a doctoral program in sport management?

Today, I have a growing concern about doctoral education in sport management. Because I worked to develop the doctoral program at Florida State upon arriving there four years ago, I examined other doctoral programs. I found a few to be model programs with a majority of curriculum content in sport management. On the other hand, there were many programs that are just a physical education curriculum with a sport management title. Moreover, there is no research involving doctoral programs in sport management. Therefore, I submit to you that doctoral education in sport management is in need of examination.

Additionally, some recent changes to the 1993 curriculum standards will soon go into effect and one of these changes will have a negative impact on doctoral education. The change lowers the degree requirement of one of two of a program's sport management faculty from a terminal degree to a master's degree. The consequence of this change is that doctoral students in sport management might be working with faculty who has only a master's degree. This deserves questioning and I therefore challenge us to give attention to this and work to change it.

### **Credibility**

A field of study needs to attain and sustain a certain level of credibility within its own group and among other fields. Credibility has to do with quality, accountability, and credentials. Criteria to measure credibility might be found in the level of quality and rigor in such areas as curriculum standards, credentials of faculty, student quality, meeting the demands of the job market, the literature, and scholarly associations, conferences, and awards.

Today, it is reported that sport management is gaining a relatively positive reputation (Crosset, Bromage, & Hums, 1998; Parkhouse & Pitts, 2000; Parks, Zanger, & Quarterman, 1998). In my perspective, this is because we have established many of the areas of criteria that influences credibility. However, we must be vigilant in critically examining all that we have accomplished, make changes as needed, and push ourselves to grow.

Lastly, in relation to credibility, I want to touch on a topic that I believe affects our credibility. It's a topic that has hounded us for many years—where should sport management be housed? The discussion almost always centers around the question of placing sport management either in departments of physical education or recreation, or in a school of business. Why box ourselves in? I propose that sport management should be in its own house. We have been hard at work building that house and its foundation and deserve to move in anytime now. In other words, we should be our own department or school. I challenge you to consider the possibilities of a school of sport management, or sport business. The school will contain departments focused on each content area, such as sport marketing, sport in the social context, sport finance, and sport law. Each department will have full faculties who specialize in the content areas. As you walk through the hallways, you will see signs stating, for example, the Nike Endowed Professorship of Sport Marketing, the Louisville Slugger Endowed Professorship in Sport Economics, and the LPGA Professorship in Sport Finance.

### Conclusions

As a field of study, sport management has achieved quite a lot in a relatively short period of time. However, it is time to examine all of the elements of our field of study, make adjustments where they are needed, and reevaluate predictions and goals. It is time to question the state of our literature and begin to expand its scope. It is time to address our identification markers and challenge our boxes of thinking before too much more time slips through our fingers and we miss our defining moment in the history of the development of the sport management field of study.

Lastly, I issue a challenge for the Zeigler recipient of the year 2015 to compare the next 15 years to the first 15 years. It is my hope that the Zeigler recipient will be able to report to us that we examined the state of the field, we challenged the boxes of thinking, we addressed the concerns of today, and we made sport management at the millenium a defining moment in our history.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For instance, study the works of Robert Boucher, such as Boucher, R.L. (1998). Toward achieving a focal point for sport management: A binocular perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 12, 76-85; Pakisnathan Chelladurai, such as Chelladurai, P. (1992). Sport management: Opportunities and obstacles. *Journal of Sport Management*, 6, 215-219; Gordon Olafson, such as Olafson, G.A. (1990). Research design in sport management: What's missing, what's needed? *Journal of Sport Management*, 4, 103-120; Janet B. Parks, such as Parks, J.B. (1992). Scholarship: The other "bottom line" in sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 6, 220-229; Garth Paton, such as Paton, G. (1987). Sport management research: What progress has been made? *Journal of Sport Management*, 1(1), 25-31; and Trevor Slack, such as Slack, T. (1996). From the locker room to the board room: Changing the domain of sport management. *Journal of Sport Management*, 10, 97-105.