Corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship and innovative pedagogy in sport management

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an all encompassing concept that has been broadly interpreted as an organization's "status and activities with respect to its perceived societal or, at least, stakeholder obligations" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004, p. 9). In following, corporate citizenship is understood as the actual CSR actions of the firm, and has been defined as "the contribution a company makes to society through its core business activities, its social investment and philanthropy programmes, and its engagement in public policy" (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006, p. 329). Similar in connotation, it is understood that while CSR represents an extensive toolbox of ethical business practice, corporate citizenship represents the actual 'good practices' of the firm. Due to the varied interpretations and approaches to CSR, Votaw (1972) expressed that "corporate social responsibility means something, but not always the same thing to everybody" (p. 25). Over twenty years later, Carroll (1994) indicated that CSR was still "an eclectic field with loose boundaries, multiple memberships, and differing training/perspectives" (p. 14). A plethora of meanings and interpretations of CSR rages on today.

A number of academic scholars supporting innovative pedagogy have promoted the notion of incorporating CSR and corporate citizenship into contemporary management education (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2003). de Jongh and Prinsloo (2005) suggest that it is imperative that students are presented with alternative approaches of business curriculum in order to best prepare them for the complex challenges of the corporate world and society in general to better prepare their students as future corporate citizens. They infer from Simon (1987) that "education should enable learners to expand what it is to be human and contribute to the establishment of a just and compassionate community in which a project of possibility becomes the guiding principle of social order" (p. 114). Within a number of facets and functions that represent CSR it has also been noted that it exists as a most important and "dynamic platform for teaching a number of current societal issues or management fashions" (Matten & Moon, 2004, p. 327). Further, the 2004 European Foundation for Management Development and the United Nations Global Compact called for an international initiative to support and enhance for improved business leadership embedded with the principles of CSR, to develop a "new generation of globally responsible leaders and managers" (de Jongh and Prinsloo, 2005, p. 115). Finally, and important to note relative to this study, Matten and Moon (2004) also instruct that "the single most important driver of the CSR agenda has been the initiatives of individual faculty members" (p. 330).

A concern for social responsibility and sound business practice has also been echoed in the sport management research. Babiai and Wolfe (2005) have examined the growing support of community outreach efforts by sport organizations. Lachowetz, and Gladden (2003) have examined the benefits of sport organizations and community partnerships. Further, as Frisby (2005) noted in her paper regarding critical sport management research, the need for a more socially attuned sport industry "where profits are reinvested in the community; where concerns over the environment and equity take precedence over development and profit making; where athletes, citizens and employees are empowered" (pg. 8-9) is required. In short, the context of the business of the sport industry and the curriculum of sport management programs is well positioned to examine the importance and relevance of the principles and practices of CSR and to assess the preparation of our students as future and leading corporate citizens.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship in sport management to determine if sport management programs are sufficiently addressing and preparing corporate citizenship for the sport industry. The students and faculty from a large sport management program at a medium sized North American university were studied.

The methods involved 225 undergraduate sport management students and eight sport management faculty members from a large sport management program at a medium sized North American university. The research orientation utilized mixed methods and was grounded within a cognitive-constructivist theoretical foundation. The assumptions of the constructivist method incorporated in this inquiry were supported by Patton (2002) and included the ability to develop understandings that were interpretive and based on the context and purpose. This perspective followed radical constructivism whereby understanding is defined as unique to the decisions made by an individual (Prawat & Floden, 1994).

A survey method was used to collect quantitative with a modified instrument from a corporate citizenship research project from an internationally recognized market research firm (Ispos North America, 2003). Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the undergraduate students across four randomly selected courses representing cohorts year one through four.
convenience sampling approach was utilized for the distribution of these surveys (Jackson, 1999).

Interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the sport management faculty members on their understandings of CSR. The interview questions were framed with the four dimensions of reflection outlined by LaBoskey (1993) and were (a) the purpose, (b) the context, (c) the procedures, and (d) the content perceived to be important relative to CSR within an undergraduate sport management curriculum.

The analysis included constructing meaning based on the reflection types provided by Mexirow (cited in Nicholls, 2001). The analysis was based on the constructivist view of an interpretation that was centred on the reader (Habermas, 1979; Roseneau, 1992) and was aided by "sensitizing concepts" (Patton, p. 391) including pre-established concepts for analysis that provided "a general sense of reference and, directions along which to look" (Blumer, 1969, p. 148, cited in Patton, p. 391). The qualitative analysis was organized to follow Patton's (1990) opinion that "the analytical process is meant to organize and elucidate telling the story of the data" (p. 392).

Results indicate that students perceive the sport industry as 'good, not great' in their corporate social responsibility practices. As incorporated in their curriculum, faculty indicated that principles of corporate citizenship are evident, but not specifically detailed, in sport management pedagogy. The discussion and conclusion reiterates the importance of incorporating this important management concept, and provides suggestions for innovatively integrating lessons of corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship into pedagogy for sport management curriculum.

References: