Integrating Technology into Sport Management Curricula: A Global Challenge?

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Sport is marketed and consumed in countries across the globe without major changes. Innovation and development in technology are major forces accelerating the globalization of sport business management. Managing athletes, presenting mega-sport events and producing sport equipment occur on a daily basis in the global marketplace, and career demands compel sport managers to transition from inward, localized foci to global outward foci. Managerial paradigm shifts have emerged with increasing concern about global business information systems and resultant supportive communication technology. Managers face business and management challenges in increasing globalization of the sport industry, and technological competence is fundamental to global leader and manager development in the 21st century. Training and education are recognized strategies to develop global leaders and managers (Lane, DiStefano and Maznevski, 2000) and Wilson (2008) extensively examined the utilization of technology in sport management curricula and teaching from a North American perspective. It is generally accepted that the sport industry constitutes part of the globalized business environment of the 21st century. It follows that technological proficiency of sport management students considering careers in the field becomes essential in sport management curricula design and development in all parts of the world.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to replicate Wilson’s (2008) methodology outside North America and determine (1) the types of technologies taught or encouraged by sport management faculty in sport management curricula; (2) the perceived proficiency of sport management students with technology; (3) the perceived importance of technologies to students entering the sport management workforce and (4) factors influencing the sport management faculty members’ use of technology. The entire population of full-time and part-time faculty members teaching at least one sport management course at institutions of higher education in South Africa (N=42) and Portugal (N=18) was included in the sample – a viable approach given the small number of faculty. Data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 to calculate descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations). Significance of differences below or above the midpoint of the scale was calculated by means of independent sample t-tests.

Collective preliminary results suggest reason for concern as technology utilization did not seem to be taught or encouraged in the two sample populations. E-mails (M = 3.3, SD = 1.56) and course management (M=3.2, SD=1.68) were the only technologies generally utilized in curricula. Web-design technologies (M = 1.2, SD =1.56), graphic arts technologies (M =1.9, SD =1.64) and audio-visual technologies (M = 2.3, SD =1.69) were clearly under-utilized. Presentation technologies were limited to PowerPoint (M = 3.1, SD = 1.78). Means recorded for proficiency in technology correlated with technologies utilized in curricula. Results obtained for perceived importance of technologies to students entering the sport management workforce, however, revealed incongruence regarding types of technologies taught or encouraged by sport management faculty in sport management curricula. Sport management faculty identified time (M=5.3, SD = 2.3), training (M = 5.1, SD = 2.01) and institutional technology support (M=5.1, SD =1.9) as primary factors affecting faculty members’ use of technology. The most significant implication flowing from this study is the incongruence between technologies utilized and taught in curricula and career demands of sport managers in this era of globalization. Data collection analysis, audio-video conferencing and web-design are considered key skills in the field of sport management, yet they did not rank foremost in the results. This study attempted to measure the integration of technology into sport management curricula beyond those included in the Wilson (2008) investigation and against the background of globalization of sport management. It is recommended that similar studies be undertaken with the membership of EASM, SMAANZ and Asia in order to construct a global profile that could impact sport management curricula criteria and the employability of young sport management professionals.

References