A Conceptual Understanding of Outcomes Assessment in Sport Management: Are We Punting or Kicking Off?

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The literature is overflowing with journal articles and research studies on outcomes assessment (Apostolou, 1999; Glennon, 2006; Hania, 2007; Kallus, 2008; Kear & Bear, 2007; O’Hanlon, 2007; Houston, 2005; Weaver, Kaulis & Cruitsinger, 2006; Kretovics, 1998; White, 2005; Williams, 2008). Studies relating to business management and physical education/coaching/athletic training studies exist that measure curricular outcomes (Cooper, 2002; Dils, 1996; Glenn, 2005; Glynn, 1993; Graeff, 1998; Kauth, 2002; McLeod, Snyder, Parsons, & Bay, 2008; Nash, 2002; Pritchard, Potter, & Saccucci, 2004; Sampson, 2008). A few journal articles and studies in sport management relate to the measurement of course outcomes or teaching pedagogy (Amis & Silk, 2005; Findlay & Bloemhof, 2008; Light & Dixon, 2007; Mahony, Mondello, Hums, & Judd, 2004; Mallen, Bradish, & MacLean, 2008; Pierce & Middendorf, 2008). However, a comprehensive search of 23 databases resulted in no studies focusing on assessment of program outcomes in sport management.

National sport management curricular assessment began with the development of the Sport Management Program Review Council (SMPRC) standards and protocol in 1993. Made up of appointed members from the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and, at that time, the recently established North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), the first guidelines were published utilizing a program approval process. SMPRC’s measurement framework was a solid initial benchmark sport management program administrators and faculty could use to construct their curricula. Textbooks began mirroring the content areas of the national standards. However, within the approval process, outcomes were not measured and site visits were not part of the review procedures. It focused on inputs such as faculty critical mass and course content. In 2006, the SMPRC was working on the inclusion of outcomes assessment within their approved structure. However, sport management academia had outgrown its adolescent era and needed to move toward a full accreditation model utilizing the measurement of outcomes for students graduating from sport management/business programs at all academic levels. The time had come to defend the goal line and punting was necessary to keep up with the rest of academia. And so, it should have been. Nash (2002) reported the outcomes assessment movement began around 1984.

In 2008, The Council on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) guidelines were published. Proposing excellence in sport management education, these guidelines include the establishment of accreditation principles that focus on outcomes assessment. In fact, outcomes assessment “is the most important component” (COSMA, 2008, p. 5) of the new accreditation process.

Formalized systems exist for the measurement of learning outcomes. A more notable process evolved out of a model developed by Ralph Tyler who focused on data collection from “subject matter/experts, learners, and society” (Nash, 2002, p. 13). According to Nash, Tyler never displayed his model graphically and it was initially conceived to be a paradigm strictly for curriculum development. Omstein and Hunkins (1998) labeled it the Tyler Curriculum Development Model in their book Curriculum Foundations, Principles, and Theory (1998). Nash utilized the model in assessing curricular effectiveness and it has been used by others to assess course outcomes (Nash, 2002).

The purpose of this symposium is to examine outcomes assessment systems/processes/models and propose a conceptual understanding of how sport management administrators can begin to develop their own assessment criteria to measure program effectiveness. Effective outcome measurements will be presented and an overview of how a carefully organized system of data collection can fill the overdue need of outcomes assessment in sport management that fits into a post-secondary institution’s overall accreditation processes and the COSMA accreditation principles. Participants will have the opportunity to break into groups, discuss possible ways to develop program measurements, and ask questions.
As a distinct discipline, many professors and administrators have spent time explaining proposals to start a sport management major or defend its existence within the organizational structure of an academic department, school, or college. With the creation of COSMA, this discipline is kicking off and entering a new and exciting era, one that will hopefully lead to COSMA’s recognition by the Department of Education, the pinnacle for an accrediting agency.