The Entitlement Era: An Analysis of the Factors that Influence Career Expectations of Sport Management Students

Myrah Stockdale, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Joel Cormier (Advisor), Eastern Kentucky University

Organizational theory/culture
Saturday, June 6, 2015
20-minute oral presentation (including questions) (Chaudière)

Abstract 2015-204
9:30 AM

The educational landscape is not immune to the era of entitlement that has been progressively embraced in the United States. Student consumerism and academic entitlement refers to the notion that because students are paying for their education, they subsequently deserve to be regarded as customers (Cain, Romanelli, & Smith, 2012; Delucchi & Korgen, 2002), that believe, “The customer is always right.” This is particularly concerning to educators as they face incivility in the classroom (Jason P. Kopp & Finney, 2013). Students are arriving late to classes, leaving classes early, and inappropriately utilizing technology amidst class time at an alarming rate. Educators are faced with disgruntled requests for grade inflation and preferential treatment.

Millennials or Generation Y (those born 1981-2000) have become synonymous with the academic consumerism debate. This generation of students was raised in the self-esteem movement (Branden, 1969); a time when high self-esteem was believed to lead to success (Jason P. Kopp & Finney, 2013). In order to achieve high self-esteem, education and parenting models shifted to reward minor accomplishments and participation over major accomplishments or winning (Moses & Moses-Hrushovski, 1990). The primary unintentional side effect of this treatment was increased entitlement among children. Consequently, entitled students tend to assert themselves when they feel that positive academic outcomes are deserved for minimal effort (Achacoso, 2002).

Academic entitlement could cause sizeable problems for higher education (Jason P. Kopp & Finney, 2013), as it has been associated with a host of maladaptive traits, such as: work avoidance, putting forth less effort on exams, and less focus on concept mastery (J.P. Kopp, Zinn, & Jurich, 2011). University administrators, faculty and staff may spend a disproportionate amount of time and resources managing students with high levels of entitlement. Educators may have to spend valuable time and effort dealing with students who refuse to attend class or complete assignments in a timely manner.

Further research has provided insights into variables that impact academic entitlement, including gender (Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008). Men have a propensity to exhibit characteristics of entitlement more strongly and more frequently than women. This is particularly relevant in sport management, as the discipline is relatively male-dominant. Although academic entitlement and student consumerism has been a hot topic for over ten years, very little has been published to discuss how this consumeristic view of education has effected sport management student's career expectations.

Career expectations of an entitled generation are expected to be high --Generation Y anticipates high salaries and large amounts leisure time -- two rather incompatible variables. It is important, despite the consumerist-like focus, that accurate career expectations be portrayed to students. Depressive symptoms have been linked to entitlement (Fast & Funder, 2010). This makes the educator’s role all the more vital in setting realistic career expectations in the classroom. Educators must establish precursory knowledge of student career expectations in order to more effectually communicate and guide students toward realistic outlooks.

Early sport management curricula was scrutinized for lack of collegiate-level collaboration and failure to differentiate, significantly, the curricula being delivered to undergraduate and graduate students (Brassie, 1989). This compounded with student consumerism creates a need for sport management specific assessment. Martin and Mathner (2012) conducted a study reviewing the perceived factors that led to career choice for sport management graduate and undergraduate students. The sampling results were from 81 different sport management programs and examined career choice and the relationship this had on sport management graduate and undergraduate students.
Stockdale, 2014). Perceptions from sport management students were compared to perceptions from practitioners in sport management. Statistically significant results were reported in salary perceptions, number of months necessary to reach upper-level management positions, time to find an entry-level job, and expected competencies in the field. This study furthermore found that promotion opportunity and salary were influential in career choice – which is congruent with Generation Y’s career expectations. These results were guiding principles in the study.

The participants of the study were sport management undergraduate and graduate students from a medium sized Midwestern University utilizing cluster sampling. A total of 65 samples were collected and analyzed. The sample consisted of 78.5% males (n=51) and 21.5% females (n=14) with an average age of 23.29. Participants were divided into the following groups: undergraduate student (n=45) and graduate student (n=20). Information was collected regarding internship and relevant sport management jobs that could impact the respondent’s perception of the career field (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005). The work by Martin and Mathner provided 9 scales containing a total of 47 items to measure expected salary, months till job acquirement (with a bachelors and a graduate degree), time till promotion, competencies required for career success, leading factors in sport management degree pursuit, factors in choosing major, non-university activities that are important in career, and academic activities that promote success. Lastly, items were adopted and modified from the work of Spector (P. Spector, 1985; P. E. Spector, VanKatwyk, Brannick, & Chen, 1997) in order to measure seven scales of expected job satisfaction: money, emotional attachment, promotional likeliness, meaningfulness of job, received appreciation, longevity of career, and sense of belonging. The instrument provides sufficient reliability, validity and normative data measurements (Astrauskaitė, Vaitkevičius, & Perminas, 2011).

The study will further explore the factors that influence sport management student’s career expectations. The researchers will finalize a multivariate regression model by January 2015. By establishing the factors of influence, educators and administrators alike will be equipped with the information vital in educating students which may exhibit academic entitlement with more realistic career expectations.