Reconceptualizing the Sport Management Ph.D. – For Sport Management Doctoral Students

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Geurin-Eagleman and McNary (2014) state, "the amount of research examining sport management doctoral students has been fairly limited" (p. 2). The professional preparation of doctoral students as a topic of study should be given further attention, particularly in light of comments from scholars delivering Ziegler lectures at the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) Conference over the past two decades, and additional literature on the subject. Various scholars have provided academics and students alike with differing views as to the direction of our field (Chalip, 2006; Cuneen, 2004; Mahony, 2008; Zhang, 2014); how students should be taught (Danylchuk, 2011; Fielding, Pitts, & Miller, 1991; Newman, 2014; Slack, 1996); the level of production of a sport management student (Parks, 1992; Pitts, 2001); and what advisors should be doing to prepare students for their entry into the field (Ingels, 2007; Mahony, Mondello, Hums, & Judd, 2006; Pastore, 2003; Weese, 2002; Zeigler, 1992). However, despite these views from esteemed scholars, little evidence has been provided in the intervening years to build on the scholarly connotations within these lectures and other articles with specific relation to its affect on doctoral students; and the necessary steps that a doctoral student must take in order to develop a vitae that will lead them to gain employment at a Research I institution.

The purpose of this work is to illuminate the path with which Sport Management professors, currently employed, at Research One institutions (currently classified as "Research Universities (very high research activity)" (RU/VH) by the Carnegie Classifications of Institutes of Higher Education), took to achieve such positions. The foundation for this paper lies within the work of Parks and Bartley (1996). The authors concluded "prospective faculty should acquire the research skills necessary to work and interact on equal terms with their colleagues" (p. 129), and state that "given the centrality of scholarship to the life of the academy … information about the terminal degrees and levels of scholarly productivity … could provide useful context for deliberation." (p.120). Parks and Bartley's study provides an understanding of the trends for future faculty located within our field, in 1996. The authors hypothesized two key relationships, not supported by the data; specifically that, years of experience and publications, and age and publications, held strong relationships. The study concluded that younger faculty published at a higher rate than their older colleagues. Given the growth our field has seen over the past twenty years, this study will build on the conclusions of Parks and Bartley (1996), and delve deeper into the topic of professional preparation of sport management doctoral students.

A review of The Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education shows that there are 108 institutions (Carnegie Classifications, 2010) that are classified as RU/VH institutions. We identified from the NASSM program database (NASSM, 2015) 57 RU/VH institutions that offer Sport Management Programs. Among these, 21 offer Ph.D. programs in Sport Management. Through an initial review of 5 randomly sampled institutions, 24 full-time faculty members were identified. These faculty members held three positions: Professor (n=4); Associate Professor (n=8); Assistant Professor (n=12). These academics graduated from doctoral programs between 1986 and 2014, holding a mean time between graduation and employment at a RU/VH institution of 2.70 years. While five academics within the sample obtained positions at RU/VH institutions in the semester immediately upon graduation, it is the time between graduation and employment that is of interest to this study; specifically, what did, individual faculty members achieve, from an academic perspective, that placed them in a position to gain employment at a RU/VH institution.

This study will examine, how faculty who are currently employed at RU/VH institutions were positioned upon graduation, and what the faculty who did not gain immediate employment at an RU/VH institution, achieved academically in this time period to obtain such a position. Data will be gathered from sport management academics currently holding positions at RU/VH institutions, refining a survey instrument utilized in Parks and Bartley's (1996) study. This instrument contained 18 items seeking demographic, academic, teaching, and employment data. As a
refinement, further data will be sought to establish the ‘academic’ position these faculty held upon graduation, and prior to obtaining a job at a RU/VH institution. Furthermore, the quality of the publication will also be taken into consideration within the data analysis, to establish whether this has an impact on obtaining employment.

Subsequently, qualitative interviews (such as those seen within Mahony, Mondello, Hums, & Judd. 2004) will be conducted with two select groups of faculty ((i) Recent hires within the past academic year, (ii) Senior scholars who have hired (or are in the process of hiring) at RU/VH institutions. The intention of this qualitative inquiry is to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the importance of personality in the interview process, the importance placed upon standard of publication or conference over number, and what part of scholarship was placed at a greater importance throughout the interview process at a RU/VH institution. A third element of this study will comprise a social network analysis, seeking to establish whether there is a connection between location of study, and location of employment.

This study will— for the purposes of exploring potential (successful) options that current academics have taken to achieve positions at RU/VH institutions—what a doctoral student should be achieving upon graduation, and immediately after graduation, to place them on a path to employment within a RU/VH institution. A graduate must be aware of the differentiation in current practices that their competitors are achieving, and potential departmental colleagues and employers achieved, to gain employment. This study will also inform current, employed, scholars within Sport Management Doctoral Programs of the realities surrounding employment upon graduation, especially with a RU/VH institution, so that they can prepare their advisees for graduation; and additionally, use the data gained through this study for recruiting purposes.

References

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