Sport Entrepreneurship: Its Time As Part of Sport Management Curricula Offerings Has Come

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Management - Other (Other)  
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Entrepreneurship has been taught and studied in Colleges of Business for several years. Some colleges and universities have developed entire curriculums to train and educate students in the art and science of entrepreneurship. Sometimes instructors of these courses allow students to work in groups in order to brainstorm and research ideas for a new product or business and then present their results to the class in an “Apprentice TV Show” type competition. Learning outcomes emphasized in entrepreneurship courses are many and can include some of the following: understanding what an entrepreneur is, recognizing opportunities and generating ideas, conducting a feasibility analysis, identifying a mentor, writing a business plan creating a business model, planning appropriate legal structures and foundations, building a new venture team, procuring financing and funding for your business, marketing in a nutshell, branding, advertising, where to look for customers, management concerns for a new start up business, and developing an effective web site for your business (Ashton, 2012; Barringer, 2014).

Unfortunately, sport management programs have been slow to embrace the notion of entrepreneurship. Part of the reason has been an overemphasis on job placements in college athletics (e.g., marketing, compliance, fund-raising, administration,…), professional sport (e.g., public relations, sales, promotions,…), facility management positions (e.g., operations, group sales,…), and sport event management opportunities (e.g., planning, organizing, implementing). Some sport management students have even bridged over to working in college and private sector recreational sport and intramural settings (e.g., college recreational sport programs, military MWR programs, running public softball leagues).

Although many undergraduate and graduate sport management students have been successfully placed in traditional sport management positions in the past, the growth in the number of college sport management professional preparation programs nationally would suggest that sport management program graduates will need to expand their job search horizons at some point in the future into the small business private sector. A small percentage of sport management graduates are already entering the small business sector when they have opened health and fitness clubs or established sport academies or created a sport marketing agency. A recent trend nationally has been to establish consulting businesses in sport or construct and manage private sport recreational facilities that cater to youth sport tournaments, adult sport leagues, and high school age sport club practice sessions in soccer, volleyball, and basketball.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a content analysis of sport management college program web sites and online catalogs (curriculum and course listings) to determine the nature and scope of sport entrepreneurship courses and competencies that are being taught in college and university level sport management programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Ratten, 2010).

The methodology used for this study includes a content analysis of college sport management curricula as listed on their web sites and/or college catalogs. An analysis of listed courses, course descriptions, and related curriculum and course materials was conducted. If a sport management program listed courses in entrepreneurship in another program (e.g., College of Business) then that data was listed on the spreadsheet. A matrix and spreadsheet were created in order to record data for this study. The NASSM web site online directory of undergraduate and graduate sport management programs in the United States along with cross-listing of programs from the Degrees in Sports.Com web site. A total of 480 colleges and universities were identified from the NASSM web site that offer a sport management program at either the bachelor’s or master’s or doctoral levels (or all three levels).

Preliminary results of this study suggest that less than 2% of all college and university sport management program curricula or course listings identified in this study included some form of sport entrepreneurship courses, content, or competency descriptors for entrepreneurship based on the matrix and spreadsheet criteria.
Discussions related to this study suggest that, in the future, sport management faculty and administrators would be wise to develop courses in sport entrepreneurship. This could include covering sport management skills and competencies in more than one course or included in existing traditional courses. The better option would be to develop multiple courses in sport entrepreneurship by creating a track or option area for the students. Some business schools have developed certificates in entrepreneurship and the same could be done for sport entrepreneurship. At the present time, it appears that sport entrepreneurship is not on the curricular radar for many sport management faculty who oversee professional preparation programs.

The final part of this presentation will cover a syllabus used in a sport entrepreneurship course and discuss the objective, content, readings, and various teaching/learning activities associated with such a course.