Impact of Prior Practical Experience on Sport Management Professors’ Research and Teaching

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Teaching/Learning - Other (Other)
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Calls for a better integration of sport management research and practice have been made several times over the past two plus decades (Costa, 2005; Irwin & Ryan, 2013; Weese, 1995). These appeals typically include a desire to see more research that can be translated into practice. To that end, scholars have suggested strengthening the link between practitioners and researchers to increase useful comprehension of research results (Chalip, 1990). Weese (1995) suggested involving more professional members in NASSM, while others, such as Jinkins and Cecil (2015) and Pauline and Pauline (2008), have suggested experiential learning as a way to bridge the gap between academe and practice.

Dewey’s (1938) Experiential Learning Theory assigns the facilitation of appropriate experiences for students as the teacher’s role. Accordingly, many have called for an increase in experiential learning for sport management students to better prepare them for roles in the sport industry (Hardin, Bemiller, & Pate, 2013; Pauline, 2013; Pierce & Petersen, 2015). Irwin and Ryan (2013) suggested that practice-based content be embedded within the curriculum as an additional way to bridge the gap between practice and theory. Despite these calls for collaboration between academicians and practitioners, these partnerships are not easy to build or maintain (Jinkins & Cecil, 2015).

One area that is often overlooked when discussing the gap between academia and practice is the role of the professor with practical experience. To date, there is a dearth of research regarding the impact of prior professional experience upon the teaching, research, and service of professors. However, when discussing the gap between research and practice in sport management, this particular group of professors has a distinct perspective that could be used to shrink the gap.

The purpose of our panel presentation is to offer a discussion on the impact of prior professional experience on research and teaching. The panel will include two former Assistant Athletic Directors who both worked for multiple NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments, a licensed attorney who formerly served as a Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) for an intercollegiate athletic department, and a former Director of Strategic Consulting for a leading global sport marketing agency. The panelists will discuss their individual experiences incorporating their industry background into their research and teaching. Additionally, the panelists will offer their thoughts on the gap between theory and practice and offer suggestions on how to further bridge that gap. Talking points will include specific examples from the panel on how they have leveraged their professional networks in research and teaching, suggestions on how faculty can more fully engage with practitioners, and thoughts on how to attract more professionals to Sport Management PhD programs. The panel will also discuss how researchers with little or no industry experience can incorporate some of the discussed practices in their own research, as well as how to better collaborate with colleagues with industry experience on research projects. The format of the presentation will be a panel discussion with ongoing audience participation. One panelist will direct the conversation to ensure all topics are covered.