Knowledge Creation in Traditional or Integrated Doctoral Programs

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Corley and Giola (2011) argued management science requires awareness of and the potential utilization of knowledge created by other disciplines. Complementing this statement, Mudambi, Hannigan, and Kline (2012) suggested the advancement of management scholarship begins with doctoral student mentoring and offered two possible approaches to train doctoral students capable of helping both faculty and student recognize research opportunities, improve management practices, and generate theoretical or conceptual knowledge for the field. First, the traditional approach involves training students through a curriculum that offers a broad-based learning experience emanating from the general foundational disciplines that make up a field. Under this approach, sport management scholars would separately study the different foundational areas such as consumer behavior, organizational behavior, finance, facility management, economics, and law. However, the traditional approach limits the mentor to helping doctoral students understand and eventually integrate the theory primarily developed in their specialized home domain. In essence, knowledge creation may be hindered through a lack of integration with other subdisciplines. Further, any knowledge created may not be applicable to other domains, theoretically or practically.

The second approach uses management theory as part of an integration plan. Within the integrative approach, scholars utilize their training within the foundational disciplines and their selected cognate area to establish research-related connections between the established subdisciplines during graduate study (Mudambi et al., 2012). Overall, the integration approach compels academic attention to the bridging of disciplines that make up a field because the sum of their separate study may not equal their collective synergy (i.e., produce unique finds practically and theoretically). However, it should be noted that too much integration may lack the depth required for substantial knowledge creation which a traditional approach might provide.

Examining the extent that the foundational core and the associated program structure (i.e., curriculum design) may provide opportunities for knowledge creation, we seek to address the following basic questions: Do Sport Management Ph.D. programs achieve success helping their students create new knowledge? Do Sport Management Ph.D. programs rely on traditional or integrative-based approaches/structures? Is there an appropriate balance between specialization and integration and how that is structured in doctoral program curricula? Finally, what phase in an academic mentoring career (i.e., tenured or tenure-track) is best associated with knowledge creation of doctoral students?

The present research provides an important point of reference for future program design decisions by presenting information about two distinct mentoring approaches. We concentrate our study on Ph.D.-granting institutions because we argue they possess the most incentives to produce influential knowledge for the field. While previous research has examined doctoral preparedness (e.g., Ferris & Ferrewe, 2014; Mahony, Mondello, Hums & Judd, 2004) and knowledge creation (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008) in sport management separately, there is little to no previous research that explores program design in relation to knowledge creation from the most critical academic institutions in our field. Thus, our study will provide some of the first points of comparison regarding relative performance of individuals at various employment ranks, institutions, and program design. However, we would like to point out that the present research will not make claims or attempt to rank the doctoral programs in Sport Management.

To understand the relationship, we will study the entire population of those programs in Canada and the United States as acknowledged by the North American Society for Sport Management. The first set of data involves the characterization of a Ph.D. program approach through a review of the curricula provided by each institution. We framed traditional programs as producing curricula primarily interested in the development of theory within the individual foundation disciplines of Sport Management. Following the process offered by Mudambi et al. (2012), we classified programs as traditional when 50% or more of their required minimum coursework, excluding dissertation
hours, were in sport management foundational classes. In contrast, we framed integrative-focused programs as those interested in theory development and its application across coursework offered throughout the university (i.e., outside sport management). The curricula to be used in the present study were collected via the publicly accessible documents made available by each institution’s web site. However, the extent to which Ph.D. programs differ on traditional and integration may be unclear. To address this concern regarding classification, we examined course descriptions from the General Catalog offered by each individual university and contacted program coordinators for their perspective.

The second set of data requires the discovery of faculty advisors and their contribution to knowledge creation through an examination of their CV. Within the present study, citation count (via an average of Google Scholar and Scopus), rank of journal publications (via Australian Business Deans Council-ABDC), and number of published papers, presentations, textbooks, and book chapters (via self-provided or publicly accessible curriculum vitae) guide our assessment on the direction and intensity of knowledge creation and reach/impression. We include multiple types of knowledge creation because article citation counts as standalone representatives are not legitimate (Mudambi et al., 2012). Furthermore, we support other perspectives (e.g. Brouthers, Mudambi, & Reed, 2012; Dunlap-Hinkler, Kotabe, & Mudambi, 2010; Pfleger, Katz, & Bowers, 2017) that suggest citation decision may not be based on groundbreaking work but may have other influences less clear (e.g., institution of authors, accessibility to databases, self-citation interests).

We also trace each faculty member’s academic career from their time as a doctoral student until present. For some faculty, this included movement to several different institutions. Within, we recorded their status (i.e., tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure-track, student), school name(s), Carnegie Classification of the institution(s), and year of employment or status change, and publications with graduate students. Collecting this information addresses a subsidiary question about the level of productivity at various stages in an academic career and level of student engagement. Moreover, it provides information that could possibly connect program classification to knowledge creation and its subsequent reach or level of impression. Faculty CVs were collected via the institution's web site during September of 2017. Emails were sent to faculty whose website did not provide a CV or did not provide an updated CV. Those were collected during October 2017.