Proposing an Integrative Model of Entry-Level Career Readiness in Sport Management

Emily Plunkett, University of Florida
Michael Sagas (Advisor), University of Florida

Teaching/Learning - Professional Development (Other) virtual asynchronous
20-minute oral presentation (including questions) Session: Career Preparation

Abstract 2020-300

As the number of undergraduate sport management programs continues to grow (Eagleman & McNary, 2010; NASSM, 2019) and the number of sport management graduates seeking careers increases, the competitiveness of the industry makes it increasingly important for programs to ensure they are adequately preparing graduates for entry-level careers (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). While graduating career-ready students is an optimal programmatic outcome, in reality, it is extremely challenging to assess. After a thorough review of more than 50 refereed manuscripts devoted to career development, we contend the vocational behavior literature, along with the sport management body of knowledge, is quite ambiguous in conceptualizing and operationalizing the term “career readiness,” as no clear or scholarly definition exists for the term and few if any instruments purport to measure the construct of readiness. Indeed, measures of career maturity (Super, 1955; Super, 1984), career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), and vocational identity (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980) are often used as proxies for career readiness, but these measures offer limited domain coverage and fail to address the comprehensive nature of preparation for an entry-level career, especially in sport.

The lack of consistent definitions and measures of a career readiness construct is also problematic in that there is not currently a consistent or practical way to assess the preparedness of graduating students for the workforce. We believe the problem is amplified when the experiential nature of sport management curricula and call for industry experience is considered (Schoepfer & Dodds, 2010), as a sport-specific approach is needed to address how the broadness of careers in sport management necessitates career exploration in the education process. The purpose of this study to create and advance a new integrative model of entry-level career readiness specific to the field of sport management, the Career Readiness for Sport (CRS) model.

The CRS model integrates vocational behavior and career literature (viz., Savickas, 2005), college student development theory literature (viz., Chickering and Reisser, 1993), psychology and counseling literature (viz., Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010), organizational behavior/psychology literature (viz., Duval & Wicklund, 1972) and sport management literature (viz., Cunningham et al., 2005) to best address the comprehensive nature of career preparation. When utilizing an integrative approach, we seek to combine the “strengths of seemingly contrasting theoretical and methodological approaches without losing sight of the unique contributions” each has advanced (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 12). The CRS advances three meta-constructs of career readiness in Cognitive Career Flexibility, Career Self-Awareness, and Career Exploration. Each construct is informed by subdomains of specific internal factors and external factors.

Assessing career readiness as both an antecedent of career functioning, and an outcome of curricular offerings in sport management, could assist in program development, program evaluation, and better guidance and counseling of students for careers in a unique sport management career marketplace. A series of propositions are advanced, as well as pathways for future psychometric measures to emerge from the concepts. Explicit practical applications of the CRS to the sport management curricula are also suggested.