Review

Intersections between sport management and youth development

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The purpose of this article is to explore potential intersections between sport management and youth development in underserved communities. Most sport management programs focus on preparing students for employment in intercollegiate athletics and professional sport. While the management of agencies in underserved communities is receiving increased attention in the field, many programs do not familiarize students with the key concepts and complexities involved in the successful administration of these physical activity-based agencies. We present a case for broadening the scope of sport management to include youth development perspectives and the administration of physical activity-based organizations in underserved communities. In consideration of this objective, we address characteristics of underserved communities, tenets of youth development, criteria for inclusive and holistic physical activity programs, value of critical pedagogy teaching approaches, and the importance of multicultural proficiency. Finally, we offer strategies for integrating curricular, internship and research imperatives. Expanding the field in this manner can attract a greater number of students, develop a more engaged citizenry of future practitioners, and better assist underserved communities.

Key words: Youth development, sport management, underserved communities, critical pedagogy, youth physical activity.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of sport management programs in the United States are developed with the objective to prepare students for careers in the professional and elite amateur sport industry. Sport management students typically have a sport background and through coursework and internships, cultivate management skills, learn organizational theory and gain competencies in the core areas of the field (Masteralexis et al., 2011; COSMA, 2010; Pedersen et al., 2010). While the pedagogical emphasis of this model is to train students to work in many facets of the sport industry, it does not familiarize them with the various concepts and complexities involved in managing

physical activity programs in underserved communities.

The bulk of required coursework and textbook material in sport management does not incorporate youth development perspectives or consider underserved communities beyond the scope of philanthropic initiatives or administrative practices (COSMA, 2010). As Pitts (2001) noted, "when one reads the totality of our literature, one gets the distinct impression that sport management is nothing more than the study of managing college athletics and some professional sports" (p.3). Absent from students' educational training are the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of applied youth development work, as well as opportunities to gain experience and explore community-based employment. We are advocating not only for sport management to expand the scope of its settings to more centrally include physical activity-based agencies in underserved communities, but

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also to broaden its curriculum to address the needs of such agencies. Reciprocally, students in youth development who are interested in working in these sites will benefit from sport management courses that train students in sport-specific management skills.

The purpose of this article is to provide strategies for better preparing sport management students to administer sport- and physical activity-based programs in underserved communities. First, we discuss the characteristics of underserved communities and provide background on tenets of youth development. Next, we consider the field of sport management and discuss ideas for broadening its scope through curricular innovations, service learning internships, and research projects. Finally, we offer specific strategies for incorporating youth development perspectives into sport management.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Understanding underserved communities

In order to successfully run a physical activity-based youth agency in an underserved community, it is imperative to develop an understanding of the life circumstances of targeted youngsters, who often lack the proper guidance and support needed to develop into responsible adults (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2008). While the scope and severity of daily experiences in underserved communities is unique to the individual, these communities are commonly characterized by poverty, unsafe environments, school dropouts, drug use, drug trafficking, delinquent behavior, teen pregnancy, gangs and violence (Benson, 1997; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2008). Each youth varies in the level of adaptability that allows navigation through these societal barriers (Hellison et al., 2000). Unlike the confines of the in-school experience, physical activity-based agencies have the ability to aid where schools often fail: teaching positive morals, values, beliefs and providing a sense of belonging, meaning and inner strength to help youth defy the odds of falling prey to the plight of underserved communities (LeMenestrel and Perkins, 2007). Youth agencies need leaders who have a vision, passion, and mission for making a significant contribution to these communities. Sport management can help train students to become these leaders.

Developing inclusive and holistic programs

Leaders of traditionally run physical activity programs in underserved communities often believe that youth will learn various character and life skill developing qualities simply through participation. Such programs can provide safe and enjoyable activities, yet often fall short of reaching their full potential (Petitpas et al., 2005; Pitter & Andrews, 1997). In addition, the tendency to view youth as problems that need to be fixed, as well as having bad attitudes and indifference toward adults and peers, has been associated with a deficit reduction lens (Hamilton et al., 2004). This dynamic has resulted in youth not attending or fully engaging in an agency.

Over the past 15 years the groundbreaking vision and field of youth development has provided a more holistic, strength-based approach to programming (Hellison, 2011; Holt, 2008; Walsh, 2008). This orientation is closely related to the principle of universality. If all youth need support in their development, then participation in a program is no longer stigmatized by terms such as intervention, prevention, or programs for at-risk/high-risk youngsters (Hamilton et al., 2004). Holistic programs have seamlessly taught important life skills through physical activity and have exhibited clear strategies that foster the transference of these skills to academic, personal and social, and career development domains (Frasier-Thomas et al., 2005). According to Perkins and Noam (2007), effective features for a youth development setting include:

Physically and psychologically safe

The emotional climate is mostly positive, supportive, and respectful, with a lack of negative behaviors. Practices in the program increase safe peer interactions and decrease unsafe confrontational interactions. Programs also provide several opportunities of belonging regardless of skill ability, with sensitivity toward the cultural environment surrounding the program.

Appropriate structure and positive social norms

Programs have clear rules, responsibilities, and consequences that are decided by all stakeholders including youth, parents, and program staff. Even sites that are providing opportunities for potential elite athletes should allow youths to pass through three stages of development. Youth participate in a variety of activities in childhood (age 6 to 12), and a decreased number during the specializing years (age 13 to 15) and the investment years (16+) (Frasier-Thomas et al., 2005).

Supportive relationships

The establishment of meaningful relationships (adult-to-peer and peer-to-peer) is a cornerstone for youth development programs, which also facilitates ownership

and a sense of belonging in the program. Programs have caring, connected and supportive adults who genuinely work to earn quality relationships with youth.

Support for efficacy and skill building

Programs emphasize personal improvements in athletic abilities, rather than focusing on peer comparison. Programs promote life skills such as leadership, decision-making, problem solving, and goal-setting. They offer meaningful challenges that support autonomy and making a real difference in the community.

Active learning and opportunities for recognition

Programs provide interactive learning opportunities, and let youth take risks and learn how to fail courageously. They help youth develop self-reflection skills through teachable moments, writing in journals, and sharing accomplishments. Effort, improvement, and sportsmanship are encouraged and recognized.

Ecological and holistic programs

Programs consider the whole child within multiple roles - not just the role of a "player" or "athlete" - that foster a healthy and contributing young person. Programs address various facets of the physical, emotional, social, and educational growth of youth.

Integration of family, school, and community efforts

Programs aim to create a synergy and concordance with the many areas of youths' lives to help ensure similar norms, expectations, and consistent messages. Each area is a unique environment that provides a positive, consistent message.

These seven primary points offer a broad perspective for implementing youth development concepts in sport and physical activity settings. With proper training, future sport management leaders could deliver structured, holistic, strength-based programs that will provide long lasting, life skill driven programs that help meet the needs and demands of youth in underserved communities. By incorporating curricular material in youth development and internship opportunities in the community sector, sport management programs can provide students with a broader base of career options and in so doing help expand the field's mission to include more social and civic considerations.

Expanding the scope of sport management

In his 2007 *Perspective* on the need for a tenable theory of sport management, NASSM founding member and celebrated educational sport scholar Earle Zeigler advocates for such an expansion and re-articulation by arguing that:

provision for managing and promoting developmental physical activity in sport, exercise, and physical recreation for people of all ages, be they part of accelerated, normal, or special populations should at least be an auxiliary part of our mission in sport management. (p.306)

Zeigler's goal for the field can be accomplished through collaboration with youth development practitioners and expansion of sport management curricula, internship opportunities, and applied research perspectives to better prepare students to work in community-based youth agencies.

Curriculum

Curricular innovations guided by critical pedagogy (Hooks, 1994, 2003; Giroux, 1997; Wright, 2001/2002) can broaden the scope of sport management programs to include community-based youth development settings. They allow for a wider range of coursework from multiple perspectives and create democratic and communal learning spaces. They also encourage civic engagement, which is based on value for and commitment to improving the well-being of one's community and occurs when a sense of agency is shared among citizens (Veri, 2006). This approach to teaching and curriculum in sport management can result in a stronger emphasis on community through textbook content, assigned readings, lecture material, and internship sites. In addition to changes in core course content geared toward youth development, curriculum expansion would allow students to explore complementary coursework in fields such as recreation and leisure studies, child and adolescent development, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, education, public policy and health education. Multidisciplinary coursework enables students to develop a more comprehensive, holistic approach to sport management. Furthermore, as Frisby (2005) contends, this re-visioning of sport management curriculum can effectively develop strong critical thinking skills and commitment to addressing social issues among students. Spence et al. (2009) advocate for a greater commitment to expanding students' views to accommodate new and alternative ways of thinking, as well as building leadership skills that encompass critical viewpoints. This

aptitude can be developed through reflective assignments such as journaling and other writing exercises on research literature, leadership self-analysis, and post-internship assessment (Spence et al., 2009). Furthermore, the use of narrative writing in the classroom (Liberti, 2004; Veri, 2006) can help students achieve heightened self-awareness and social consciousness.

Critical pedagogy approaches can also facilitate the development of multicultural proficiency in students. Multicultural proficiency involves knowledge, respect, and appreciation of differences associated with the heritage, characteristics, and values of different groups. Moreover, this outlook is marked by proactive value for diversity and concern for social justice (DeSensi, 1994; Giroux, 2000). Multicultural proficiency is especially important for those working in youth sport and physical activity agencies in underserved communities. Given the diversity of these communities, practitioners must be able to address issues related to racial, ethnic, gender, religious, ability, immigrant and socio-economic status differences (see ,eg.,Pitter & Andrews, 1997). As such, educators must "work toward a truly multicultural setting in belief and action and especially in the education of future sport managers" (DeSensi, 1994: 63) by adopting the goals of multicultural education and employing critical pedagogy in the teaching, advising, and supervising of sport management students. This model of education can lead to the creation of an engaged citizenry of future practitioners.

Applied internship opportunities

Meaningful applied internships are an integral part of the pedagogical process and curricular framework of sport management. One way to provide students with meaningful internships is through service learning opportunities. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995), service learning is a course-based educational experience "in which students: a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (p. 112).

When framed as service learning experiences, internships have more capacity to increase students' ability to draw connections between the classroom and their practical work in the field, provide them with opportunities for critical reflection, and instill a sense of social responsibility in students (Spence et al., 2009). Furthermore, service learning internships are a curricular means of examining social justice issues (Warren, 1998) and strengthening students' commitment to community involvement (Sax and Astin, 1997). As such, holistic

youth physical activity programs are important sites for sport management student internships. They provide students with valuable work experiences, as well as opportunities to provide much needed community support in attempts to alleviate the impoverished conditions of underserved communities. These social justice imperatives can stem from the missions of universities and sport management degree programs.

Research perspectives

Scholarship on multicultural issues, community service, youth development work, and the benefits of incorporating new and different theoretical and practical approaches in the field will significantly expand the knowledge base of sport management (Amis and Silk, 2005; Chalip, 1997; DeSensi, 1994; Edwards and Skinner, 2009; Frisby, 2005; Nauright and Pope, 2009; Pitter and Andrews, 1997; Pitts, 2001; Slack, 1996; Zeigler, 2007). Just as social justice imperatives can shape internships, sport management scholars can engage in more critical research in order to promote social justice (Frisby, 2005) through their collaborations, publications, conference presentations, community service, pedagogical practices, and student mentorship. Through collaboration with colleagues in youth development, sport management educators can gain valuable insights, knowledge, material, and practical strategies for the managerial and academic training of students who wish to work in the community sector. In this manner, sport management can serve students and promote social justice through commitment to youth in underserved communities.

Strategies for integrating curriculum, internships and research

We propose the following strategies for integrating curricular, internship, and research imperatives within sport management programs in order to demonstrate value for youth development concerns in sport and physical activity programming:

1. Encourage sport management students to take courses on youth development;
2. Include material on youth sport settings and related social issues in core sport management courses;
3. Encourage students to intern with community organizations;
4. Emphasize value for diversity and social justice across the curriculum;
5. Invite guest speakers from community organizations to sport management classes;

6. Seek opportunities to fulfill service obligations by partnering with community organizations; and 7. Encourage students to conduct research on youth development and community organizations from a sport management perspective. This list of strategies is by no means exhaustive, nor do we mean to imply that some sport management faculty and programs are not already implementing these or similar strategies. Which and how many strategies are adopted depend on the capacity of a department and its faculty to embrace, commit to and agree to incorporate them. What matters most is for the strategies to be implemented in a meaningful, consistent, and holistic manner.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is to identify and explore the potential of intersections between sport management and youth development in underserved communities. Specifically, our intent is to raise pertinent questions and offer suggestions for expanding the field of sport management to prepare its students to work in sport and physical activity-based organizations in these communities. This objective can be met in the broader context of the discipline through innovation in curriculum, internship opportunities, and research perspectives. The strategies suggested are intended to serve as guiding concepts for practice in the classroom, in advising work with students, in research endeavors and in partnerships with community organizations. Moreover, as stated in the introduction, students and practitioners in youth development can benefit by seeking resources and collaborative opportunities with those working in sport management. The field first needs to commit to preparing students to work in structured, holistic, strength-based youth programs, and then develop a theoretical and philosophical basis for working in underserved communities from courses, concentration areas, and degree programs. It is our hope that concerted, sustainable efforts toward realizing this commitment will ultimately attract students interested in sport management to work in community settings and enhance the already-burgeoning and vibrant field of sport management.

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