

Comparisons between Undergraduate Sport Management Programmes in the United Kingdom and the United States

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Abstract

The majority of associated research and literature on the topic of sport management education appears to be the product of North American and Australian scholarship with little representation from European colleagues. In an attempt to address this imbalance, this paper reviews the development and position of sport management undergraduate education in the UK, and using previously published data, makes comparisons with the development and provision of similar courses in the United States of America. Results indicate that sport management undergraduate degree programmes are larger (with regards to student numbers) in the US with a higher student to staff ratio than in the UK. In neither the US nor UK is there an identified “home” for sport management programmes, and there are differences relating to the faculties, schools or institutes that house these programmes. This paper concludes that in order to evaluate the current provision of sport management education in the UK in comparison to more established markets such as the US, there is a need for further data analysing the evolution and development of this subject specifically from a UK perspective.

Introduction

The practice of managing sport has been around far longer than the organised education of such an activity. Reference to the evolution of an academic field associated with sport management appears to have a diary entry of either 1966, when the first Masters degree programme in sport management was established at Ohio University in the United States (Brassie, 1989; NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Stier, 2001; Laird, 2005), or in the 1980s, when according to Costa (2005 p. 117) “the field defined itself as a discipline signalled by the founding of NASSM”. However, paradigmatic discussion and debates continue to resound as academics and scholars try to define sport management as a discipline.

Over the last three decades, the field has grown significantly with professional associations having been established in Europe (European Association of Sport Management (EASM), 1993), Australia and New Zealand (Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ), 1995), and more recently in Asia (Asian Association for Sport Management (AASM), 2002), and Latin America (Latin American Sport Management Association (ALGEDE), 2009). Despite the global formation of sport management associations, a narrative literature review relating to sport management education indicated that the majority of associated research and literature on the topic was the product of North American and Australian scholarship with little emanating from Europe, and no specific research from Asia or Latin America.

Key issues pertaining to the provision of sport management education include but are not limited to: (1) the appropriate academic home for sport management (Hardy, 1987; Brassie, 1989; Chalip, 2006; Humphreys & Maxcy, 2007; Jones et al., 2008), (2)

recognised accreditation (Fielding et al., 1991; Jones et al., 2008), (3) academic profiles of faculty members (Skinner & Gilbert, 2007; Jones et al., 2008), (4) research focus (Weese 1995; Cuneen & Parks, 1997; Chalip, 2006; Light & Dixon, 2007), and (5) curricular content (NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Skinner & Gilbert, 2007).

Several studies have reviewed the provision of sport management education from a national perspective (Masteralexis, & McDonald, 1997; Jones et al., 2008) but there have yet to be any international comparative studies. Jones et al (2008) provide a recent comprehensive study of sport management programmes in the United States focussing on several of these points. The current research utilises and adapts the study design of Jones et al (2008) to obtain UK specific data whilst also allowing comparative analysis to be presented.

The purpose of this study therefore is to: (1) provide an overview of the development of UK sport management programmes in comparison to that in the US, (2) provide a comparative snapshot of UK and US sport management programmes, including programme and faculty profiles, and (3) identify key similarities and differences between UK and US provision of sport management education.

Sport management programmes in the USA

The development of sport management as an academic discipline is most overtly defined in a North American context. The number of programmes offered has inevitably increased since 1966 following the establishment of the first Masters degree programme at Ohio University. According to the latest figures on the NASSM website there are currently 382 sport management programmes in the United States, 219 Bachelors, 140 Masters and 23 Doctoral programmes (NASSM, 2009).

What appears to be unique about sport management programmes in the US is the focus on accreditation of curriculum. The rapid increase in sport management programmes across so many institutions lead to disparities with regard to curriculum content. Brassie (1989) remarked that whilst some programmes offered a full sport management curriculum others did not include sufficient subject specific content to even “warrant a minor or concentration” (p. 159). In order to address this issue the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) engaged a task force beginning in 1986, to develop curricular guidelines and accreditation for sport management programmes (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). At that time the accreditation was designed to “foster the attainment and maintenance of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education for sport management and to develop curriculum standards that would meet the contemporary needs of the sport industry” (NASPE-NASSM, 1993, p. 160).

The first NASPE-NASSM guidelines were published in 1987 and programme approval began in 1994 (Jones et al., 2008). According to the NASPE-NASSM guidelines, “20% of the total number of credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree, exclusive of the field experience credit, must be sport management course work” (NASPE-NASSM, 1993, p. 160). Specifically the undergraduate guidelines address the three components of a sport management curriculum: (1) the foundational areas of study comprising full courses in business management, marketing, economics, accounting, finance, and computer science, (2) the application areas of study comprising sport foundations (e.g., sport sociology, sport psychology, sport history/philosophy, women in sports), sport law, sport economics, sport marketing/ promotion, and sport administration, and (3) field experiences including “practica and internships” (Brassie, 1989, p. 158). The practicum

and the internship should account for approximately 15% of the total curriculum (Kelley et al., 1994).

Programme approval was originally granted by the Sport Management Program Review Council (SMPRC). However, in July 2008 NASPE and NASSM jointly established the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA), which replaced SMPRC as the specialised accrediting body (NASSM, 2009). Although there is currently a transition period between SMPRC and COSMA approval, the NASSM website still recognises all approved programmes, and to date of the 219 bachelor programmes, 54 have approval status.

Sport management programmes in the UK

Hardy (1987, p. 207) outlines that whilst “sport management” has become the preferred term, programmes may undergo several name changes in an effort to match title with curriculum. Definition and consistency of terminology may well be a symptom of a young and developing field; nevertheless it creates problems when trying to discuss the discipline of sport management and related curriculum in the UK. For example the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) initial “subject search” filter offers several sport related options, in order to access “Sport Management” you have to click on the first “Sport” link which then takes you through to the options of: “Sport Administration”, “Sport Industrial Management”, “Sport Management”, “Sport Marketing”, “Sport Tourism Management”, “Sport Turf Management”.

The UK higher education subject coding system developed by UCAS and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is known as the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS). This uses a combination of letters and numbers to indicate the subject, or combination of subjects. For example, in the coding system currently in use (JACS 2), implemented in the 2007/08 academic year, a “C” indicates biological science subjects, (“C600” denoting “Sports Science”) and “N” indicates business and administrative studies (“N222” denoting recreation/leisure management). It is perhaps a measure of the emergent nature of sports management that there are more than 20 codes currently used to identify the subject. Whilst it is not possible to identify faculty location from the codes alone, of the 65 identified undergraduate programmes with “sport management” in the title, 18 have a “C” prefix, indicating grouping within the biological sciences, and 47 programmes have a “N” prefix indicating grouping within business and administrative studies.

Owing to the constant development of subject areas, the JACS system is under constant review; proposals for the new JACS 3 have been made and the consultation period ended in August 2009. The finalised new proposals will be in use for the 2012-13 academic year (UCAS year of entry 2012). Under the new proposals, there are two possible options, both of which allocate a distinct code for “sport management”, perhaps indicating that the domain has now reached a certain degree of maturity and distinctiveness in the UK.

The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual institutions and therefore the validation process may in itself be unique for each institution, however, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement. The QAA also produce “subject benchmark statements” which provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature

and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. “Sport” comes under the QAA subject benchmark heading of “Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism” (QAA, 2009).

According to QAA subject benchmarks, the study of sport is orientated towards scientific, cultural or management-based approaches and as such a degree programme should be designed to include a selection of learning outcomes, subject content and experiential learning which will reflect these (QAA, 2009). Five broad study areas have been identified: (1) the study of human responses to sport and exercise, (2) the study of the performance of sport and its enhancement, monitoring and analysis, (3) the study of health-related and disease management aspects of exercise and physical activity, (4) the study of the historical, social, political, economic and cultural diffusion, distribution and impact of sport, and (5) the study of the policy, planning, management and delivery of sporting opportunities.

According to the QAA benchmark statements, any sport management degree programme should be designed to cover the study of the policy, planning, management and delivery of sporting opportunities. This area of study is further broken down to include: (a) understanding and applying the theories, concepts and principles of practice from the generic management areas of operations, finance, human resources, economics and marketing to sports facilities and events, (b) employing strategic planning and development planning skills in analyzing, understanding and addressing the development needs and intentions of sport organizations and communities, and (c) demonstrating a critical appreciation of sport development and facilitation principles in at least one vocational context. Within the QAA subject benchmark heading of “Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism” the only reference to work experience is related specifically to hospitality degrees, indicating that there is no specific requirement for students to undertake work experience or placement on a sport degree. Although the QAA benchmarking statements provide guidance regarding curriculum content, the fact that Universities retain autonomy of programme design may effect the definition and consistency of sport management degree content.

Method

A review of previous studies and related methods was scrutinised prior to designing this specific study. Building on research conducted by Jones et al (2008) a survey-based method was utilised. The original survey used by Jones et al (2008) was adapted slightly (both terminology and phrasing) for a UK audience but as far as possible the questions remained the same to aid comparison between the data sets. The US comparative data was taken from the published Jones et al (2008) study. The UK data in this study is original as is the comparative analysis.

The survey was designed to collect the following data: (1) the programme profile (i.e. programme name, programme location, programme size), and (2) faculty profile (i.e. number of staff, faculty research interests and scholarly activities).

US data collection:

Universities offering Sport Management undergraduate degree programmes were identified (N = 274) from: (1) the Dictionary of Sport Management Programmes, (2) the NCAA Handbook (2005) list of Sport Management programmes, and (3) internet searches including NASSM, NASPE and EASM websites. A modified random 50%

sample (N= 137) was then identified, with 50 usable data sets returned (Jones et al., 2008).

UK data collection:

The Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) “course search” tool was used to identify participants providing undergraduate degree (BA and BSc) programmes in sport management. A subject search was carried out using the term “sport management” (N = 156 programmes), including foundation degrees and joint honours. For the purpose of this study only single honours BA or BSc programmes were chosen, and to avoid repetition of results, only one programme per institute was selected (N = 36 programmes). Of the 36 programmes contacted, 11 returned completed questionnaires (30.56%) of which 10 were used for the purpose of the study owing to one course having not yet started at the responding institution.

An internet search was carried out to identify a course leader for the individual programme; this method returned limited relevant information. Heads of Institute or school were identified and contacted via email in an attempt to determine the person responsible for the “Sport Management” programme and hence the person most likely to have access to the information required to complete the survey. An introductory email was sent to an identified individual representing each programme. A further two email reminders were sent followed by telephone calls to identified individuals who had indicated that their questionnaire completion was in progress. The resulting data was then tabulated in a spreadsheet and cross-institutional data was compiled. Data was then extracted in the form presented in the US study and both sets were cross-tabulated to form the basis of the comparison.

Results

Programme profile

With regards to the 10 viable UK responses, programme validation ranged from 1980s to 2007 with only 20% of the courses existing prior to 2000, indicating that 80% of the programmes referred to in this section are less than 10 years old.

Programme location

In relation to where the programmes are housed, identified “Institutes”, “Departments” or “Schools” were defined by the top tier subject, for example “The Business School, Department of Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality” was categorised as “Business school”. Mirroring the categories identified by Jones et al (2008), (see Table 1) UK “Sport” institutes or schools are recorded under “Other”, which accounts for 3 programmes, the same percentage as those housed in a UK “Business” school.” Almost twice as many UK programmes (30%) are housed in a Business School compared to US programmes (16%). According to Jones et al (2008) 20% of American programmes included in the US study are housed in Education departments, however in relation to UK programmes, none of the responding programmes in the current study were housed in an Education department.

Programme size

The size of the programme relates to the number of students currently enrolled on the programme. Only four UK programmes had more than 50 students enrolled in total (see Table 1), the number of students ranging from 9 to 166 students. In comparison over 20% of US programmes included in Jones et al (2008) study have larger cohorts of students. The increased size of programmes in the US is reflected in the student to

Table 1: Program Profile (US: N=50*, UK: N=10)

Program Location	N (US)*	%	N (UK)	%
Health and Human Services	14	28	4	40
Education	10	20	0	0
Business	8	16	3	30
Other	18	36	3	30
Program Size				
50 or less	14	29.8	6	60
51 – 100	10	21.3	2	20
101 – 150	9	19.1	1	10
151 – 200	4	8.5	1	10
201 – 250	4	8.5	0	0
251 – 300	1	2.1	0	0
301 and over	3	10.6	0	0
Student to Faculty Ratio				
1 - 30	18	36.8	8	80
31 - 50	19	38.8	2	20
51 – 100	11	22.4	0	0
101 or above	1	2.0	0	0
Female student ratio				
Zero	0	0	1	10
0.01 – 0.20	17	39.53	3	30
0.21 – 0.40	18	41.86	4	40
0.41 – 0.60	6	13.95	2	20
0.61 – 0.80	2	4.65	0	0
0.81 – 1.00	0	0	0	0
Minority student ratio				
Zero	2	4.76	1	10
0.01 – 0.10	14	33.33	5	50
0.11 – 0.20	18	42.86	1	10
0.21 – 0.30	4	9.52	1	10
0.31 – 0.40	1	2.38	1	10
0.41 – 0.50	1	2.38	0	0
0.51 – 0.60	0	0	1	10
0.91 – 1.00	2	4.76	0	0

*Jones et al (2008)

faculty ratio, with almost 25% of programmes reporting more than 51 students to every member of staff (Jones et al., 2008). In comparison all UK programmes have a ratio of 50:1 or below; notably, 60% of programmes have between 1-10 students to every staff member. The female to male student ratio in the UK ranged from 0 to 0.45 compared to the US which ranged from 0.06-0.72. Only one programme in the UK and 2 programmes in the US reported no ethnic minority students enrolled on their programmes.

Programme approval status

Jones et al (2008) report that 30% of US programmes are approved by either NASPE or NASSM. However this survey shows that only 1 UK programme has comparative approval.

Work placement requirement

From a US perspective “work placement” was referred to as “internship”; from a UK perspective this included either “required work experience or sandwich year”. In relation to the US study, 86% of the programmes included in the research had mandatory “internships” (Jones et al., 2008) compared to the UK where 60% of programmes had required “work placement” and a further 10% had this as an option.

Faculty profile

With regards to the 10 viable UK responses, programme validation ranged from 1980s to 2007 with only 20% of the courses existing prior to 2000, indicating that 80% of the programmes referred to in this section are less than 10 years old.

Faculty size

From the UK perspective, the number of faculty in the sport management programme ranged from 2 to 15 which indicated that there were larger individual faculties in comparison to the US where numbers ranged from 1 to 12. However no UK institutions identified any adjunct faculty (see Table 2). Most (90%), UK programmes had at least one female member of faculty compared to almost 30% of US programmes which reported no female faculty (see Table 2). However, in the US study 2 programmes reported a female faculty ratio of 1.00, indicating all the faculty members were female (Jones et al., 2008).

The US study noted that ethnic minority faculty are underrepresented in sport management programs (Jones et al., 2008). The UK study did not ask respondents to specifically identify male non-white faculty members but rather the number of FTE ethnic minority staff delivering on the Sport Management course. The results show that 90% of UK courses in this survey had no ethnic minority staff, with one institution indicating that 20% of the staff delivering their programme were from ethnic minorities; these results not only concur with those of the US study, but suggest that this underrepresentation is even more marked in the UK.

Faculty research activity

Several questions focussed on faculty qualifications and research activity; unfortunately UK responses to this section were incomplete. Only 60% of UK responses gave information relating to staff qualifications, a third of these (33%) reported that faculty staff did not have a PhD compared to 7.7% of US faculty staff which don't have a terminal degree.

Table 2: Faculty Profile (US: N=50*, UK: N=10)

No of Faculty	N (US)*	%	N (UK)	%
1	5	10.2	0	0
2 – 3	15	30.6	4	40
4 – 5	17	34.7	2	20
6 – 7	7	14.3	1	10
8 – 9	2	4.1	1	10
10 or over	3	6.0	2	20
No of Adjunct Faculty				
0 – 2	33	70.2	0	0
3 – 4	8	17.0	0	0
5 – 6	4	8.5	0	0
7 – 8	1	2.1	0	0
8 - 10	1	2.1	0	0
Female Faculty Ratio				
Zero	14	29.17	1	10
0.01 – 0.20	5	10.42	0	0
0.21 – 0.40	13	27.08	4	40
0.41 – 0.60	9	18.75	4	40
0.61 – 0.80	5	10.42	1	10
0.81 – 1.00	2	4.17	0	0
Non-white Male Faculty Ratio (US) Number of Ethnic Minority Faculty Staff (UK)				
Zero	21	46.67	9	90
0.01 – 0.20	6	13.33	1	10
0.21 – 0.40	12	26.67	0	0
0.41 – 0.60	4	8.89	0	0
0.61 – 0.80	1	2.22	0	0
0.81 – 1.00	1	2.22	0	0
Faculty Having Terminal Degree Ratio¹				
Zero	3	7.69	2	33.33
0.01 – 0.20	0	0	0	0
0.21 – 0.40	7	17.95	1	16.67
0.41 – 0.60	3	7.69	3	50.00
0.61 – 0.80	7	17.95	0	0
0.81 – 1.00	19	48.72	0	0
Grant Received				
\$0 - 500	22	44.9		
\$501 – 1,500	10	20.4		
\$1501 – 5,000	6	12.2	Unknown	
\$5001 – 10,000	2	4.1		
\$10,001 or more	9	18.4		

*Jones et al (2008)

¹ Only 6 UK institutions provided this data

According to Jones et al (2008) when asked the question if teaching staff have a strong research interest 68.2% of US respondents said “Yes”, this study indicates that 50% of UK respondents have a strong research interest. In relation to presenting research at conferences 40% of UK institutions reported that staff had not presented any research, 40% had presented research but only 20% had presented Sport Management- specific research in the last three years. Analysing the UK responses shows that 40% of faculty members have published a journal article, book chapter or full book in the last year, the remaining 60% of responses either hadn’t published or were unaware of faculty published research.

Although the question “Has research funding been received for sport management?” was included on the UK questionnaire, and four respondents indicated “yes”, unfortunately they were not able to say how much this was, so comparisons with grants in the US study cannot be made.

Discussion

This study utilises primary data to provide an overview of the development of UK sport management programmes and draws comparisons to that in the US as presented by Jones et al (2008). It is important to note that there are many inherent differences in both the UK and US education systems and the respective sport industries which should be taken into consideration when making direct comparisons. However, due to the fact that North America is seen as the birth place of sport management education programmes and the majority of research relating to sport management curriculum is a product of US scholars, it is felt that in this context a level of comparison is justified.

Both Jones et al (2008) and the current UK study utilise proportionality small sample numbers in relation to the number of national sport management programmes in the US and UK respectively. Without a wider in-depth national study to draw comparisons with, it is difficult to ascertain how representative the current data is with regards to UK specific provision of sport management programmes. Whilst the development of sport management as a discipline has been identified and discussed by scholars focussing on US provision, it is evident that comparative historic UK data is not currently available. Further UK specific research is therefore required in order to determine in greater detail the development of sport management as a discipline within a national context. Without this clarification it is difficult to truly comment on the current UK situation or draw comparisons with wider (international) provision. This study has, however, provided a comparative snapshot of current sport management provision from a UK and US perspective.

It is inevitable that different countries will have distinct validation processes, however the effect on sport management curricular content and resulting differences between the US and UK is worthy of discussion. Comparing the NASPE-NASSM guidelines and the QAA subject benchmark statements, which are both designed to provide recommendations for sport management related programmes, it is possible to compare US and UK curricular recommendations. Whilst NASPE-NASSM recommend a minimum of 20% sport management specific content, the QAA benchmarks indicate that if three or more of the five study areas are included in a programme it is likely be called “sport studies”, a “sport management” programme is therefore likely to include a minimum of 60% sport management specific curricular content. This indicates that US programmes have a lower percentage requirement of subject specific curricular content to retain the title ‘sport management’ in comparison to UK programmes.

Both the NASPE-NASSM guidelines and the QAA subject benchmark statements go on to provide further detail regarding curricular content; the only “subjects” referred to on both are “marketing” and “economics”. One notable difference between the two is the reference to “work / field experience” which is a requirement for all NASPE-NASSM approved sport management programmes but is not a QAA requirement. This is evident in the analysis of Jones et al (2008) study which shows a higher percentage of US programmes (86%) requiring work experience compared to results from the current study which indicate only 60% of UK programmes require work experience.

In the early 1990s Sawyer (1993, p. 4) reported that “the vast majority of sport management programmes are housed in departments or schools of physical education”. However this did not appear to equate to an identified “home” for the subject as Stier (1993) reported that there was no consensus about where sport management should be housed, be that in an existing school or in a separate academic entity altogether. Programme location has consequences for accreditation, faculty and research yet over 15 years later there still does not seem to be a consensus regarding an identified “home” for sport management either in the US or UK.

The UK “JACS” coding system crudely splits sport management programmes into either a “biological science subjects”, or “business and administrative studies”, or in some cases a combination of both. Of the four categories used in this study to identify programme location, there was not one dominant location for UK programmes; this is also reflected in Jones et al (2008) results for US programme location. A noticeable difference between the US and UK results was that no UK programmes reside in an “Education” faculty compared to 20% of US programmes. Chalip (2006) suggests that clarity regarding the academic home of sport management is a consequence of a wider discussion regarding the intersection of sport and business nationally and at a global level.

Steir (1993) discussed the difficulty of maintaining high quality programmes with a low faculty to student ratio and a high percentage of part-time faculty. Whilst the current study did not attempt to measure “quality”, comparative results indicate that sport management undergraduate degree programmes are larger (with regard to student numbers) in the US with a higher student to staff ratio than in the UK. Results also indicate that individual faculties may be generally larger in the UK (2 to 15 in this study) compared to the US (1 to 12 in Jones et al., 2008). However whilst it is important to consider the influence of specific sport management faculty numbers with regards to defining subject focus, identity and expertise (teaching and research), it is important to note that the interdisciplinary nature of sport management means that contributions to both teaching and research may well come from other (non sport management) disciplines.

This particular study has given a limited and tentative insight into faculty qualifications and research activity. Whilst Jones et al (2008, p. 88) concludes that “the high percentage of faculty without terminal degrees and the number of part-time members may contribute to the lack of external grant money received by sport management faculty”, the lack of UK data regarding grant funding means it is not possible to draw comparative conclusions. Whilst some UK institutions provided limited information relating to faculty qualifications and research, further investigation is required to determine if the absence of data represents the lack of specific knowledge from the

respondent, the reluctance to share such information or if the data presented is indeed correct.

This paper has provided a unique descriptive review of the development and provision of sport management education in the UK. By comparing findings with the US it is possible to identify similarities and differences between the two systems at different stages of development. This paper has highlighted the lack of historical data relating to the development of the subject in the UK and has identified the need for further auditing of programme design, content and delivery from a UK perspective. The author suggests the potential for further statistical analysis of the existing data and for reflection on this data in the context of the different Higher Education environments that exist either side of the Atlantic. Taking into consideration the fundamental differences between the education systems and sport industries in the two countries, it is not the authors' suggestion that the US provision of sport management education be directly applicable to the UK. However, in order to provide UK academics the opportunity to engage in the paradigmatic discussion and debates surrounding the definition of sport management as a discipline, we have to identify and define our own system and consequent positioning.

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