Knowledge Production and the Sport Management Faculty Career

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Teaching/Learning - Professional Development (Other)  
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)  
Session: Live Q&A for Teaching/Learning (Asynchronous)  

What does the CV of a tenured faculty member look like in sport management? This question likely arises in the first meeting between faculty mentors – if mentors are assigned – and their newly hired mentees. However, research standards across our disparate academic field vary considerably, particularly as it relates to journal quality and publication quantity (Pfleegor, Katz, & Bowers, 2019). Yet, as a new field, the incentives provided through hiring, promotion, and tenure play a key role in the ability for the field to continue to build legitimacy within our own departments and across the university, and guide the ways in which research is produced by faculty. Therefore, understanding the structure of incentives provided by these expectations is central to building the field in a coherent fashion. And because sport management scholars are evaluated under the direction of broader departmental, college, and university actors, there can be considerable disagreement over what constitutes an acceptable level of scholarship output and academic rigor. Ultimately, the disparate nature of the field means that publication timelines and citation practices across subfields can result in perceived disparities in faculty productivity based on subfield alone.

Although this challenge exists across many fields, it is particularly acute for sport research, an area of society and culture that may already be viewed as trivial. This calls for additional care in ensuring rigorous research expectations to establish legitimacy across campus. It is therefore pertinent to be able to successfully – and often efficiently – communicate the scholarly substance and impact to a broader audience, including tenure and promotion committees and administrators that are not sport experts.

This work, therefore, has two goals. First, I seek to provide information to graduate students, junior faculty, and departmental committees about the career trajectories of sport management faculty in North America. Secondly, I exhibit broad-based benchmarks and measurements of research productivity and increase fairness by accounting for substantial heterogeneity in norms and citation patterns across subfields. Within these benchmarks, I propose that measures of prospective publication impact (Seifried et al., 2019) that properly deal with differences in field-level norms – namely, Eigenfactor metrics – are most appropriate in understanding faculty-level knowledge contributions within sport management programs. I also compare this with other modes of evaluation commonly applied within academia and sport management.

I find that career trajectories among research faculty vary considerably at hire, at tenure, and upon promotion to full professor in both quantity and potential impact of journals, and both within and across programs. However, average growth in publication rates between the time a faculty member is hired and when they go up for promotion has not changed as dramatically as implied by past work. The majority of recent growth in total publications at promotion takes place prior to the hiring process, presumably due to increased competitive pressures in the job market. I expand upon the (careful) use of measurement in knowledge production in the field, as well as discuss balancing field-level contributions with interaction with parent fields.