Examination for Disability Related Content across Sport Business Management Textbooks

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Introduction: Diversity is an important element for the sport business management field and its curriculum. As sport business management professionals work towards a more diverse industry, we know that in the field of sport business management representation matters. One area of diversity that often gets overlooked are people with disabilities, who are a growing population and segment in the sport business industry. How disability is viewed impacts equality and equity in the choices organizations make to fund, develop, offer, or include people and/or programs for persons with a disability, as well as policy and research (Haslett & Smith, 2020). Thus, it is important that information about disabilities be included in the literature and materials used by professionals in the field of sport management. Textbooks are a primary source of information used extensively in education efforts for delivering knowledge, beliefs, and skills about a topic (Pitts and Danylchuk, 2007; Giesler & Beadlescomb, 2015). Textbooks, especially at the undergraduate level, are often a student’s first exposure to the field through which students are socialized and form an impression of the discipline (Giesler & Beadlescomb, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the sport business management textbook literature in search of content in relation to disability, disability sport and/or people with disabilities in sport and sport business. In particular, the study focused on how and in what way people with disabilities were represented.

Methods: A total of 24 textbooks across COSMA’s 8 different content areas of sport business management were reviewed for mentions of disability, disability sport, and people with disabilities in sport business management. Textbooks were chosen via a survey to associate and full professors in the field to indicate which textbooks covered the 8 content areas. Textbooks were coded for the mention of disability, disability sport and/or persons with a disability and disability sport management. Data was also coded according to gender, industry segment, and sport focus. Data were analyzed using excel for frequency, means, and percentages.

Results: Preliminary results indicate that disability or disability sport and disability sport business were mentioned less than 0.001%. The most commonly cited words were disabled/disabilities/disablement/disabling (17%), followed by ADA (4.7%), impairment/impaired (2.8%), Paralympics (2.5%), wheelchair (2.1%), access/accessibility (1.6%). Disability sport was most prominent were textbooks related towards management followed by sports business marketing, sociocultural aspects of sport, and sport law.

Implications: The lack of inclusion of people with disabilities and disability sport may be a barrier to raising awareness, and preparation of future sport business management professionals (Taboas-Pasi & Rey-Cao, 2012). It is important that faculty include disability sport in their teaching about diversity to socialize students into making supportive decisions for those athletes.