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A Contemporary Perspective of Sports in Learning Institutions

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A Contemporary Perspective of Sports in Learning Institutions: An Annotated Bibliography

Introduction

The global sports industry has grown significantly over the past two decades to become among the ten largest industries in the country. Based on estimates documented by Chen et al. (2013), the industry generates a staggering \$213 billion annually while providing livelihoods to millions. The significant growth can be attributed to the industry's transition, whereby it is not only viewed as an entertainment industry but also as a marketing tool. With limitless global sporting events, including the Olympics, the World Cup, and Super Bowl, the global sports industry stands out as a significant pull for people keen on interacting with star athletes and seeing them in action (Chen et al., 2013). Crucially, owing to the lucrative nature of the global sports industry, the search for and recruitment of future talents has extended to learning institutions – especially high schools and colleges. As a result, at present, the appointment of sports administrators to manage sports departments within learning institutions has now become the norm, as they are viewed as crucial enablers of the development of future sports stars. The need to understand the state of sports within learning institutions from a research perspective has informed the current bibliography, which seeks to review informative sources addressing various elements of sports within learning institutions.

Yeung, R. (2013). Athletics, Athletic Leadership, and Academic Achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 47(3), 361-387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124513495277>

In the article, Yeung (2013) presents a study detailing the relationship between athletics, leadership, and academic achievement. The article details that high school and college sports appeal to students from all walks of life, whereby over close to 50 per cent of students from all

ethnic backgrounds in the US reported that they participate in college athletics. That said, despite the evident popularity of athletics among parents, students, and communities, difficult economic times, especially after the financial crisis of 2008, have meant increased scrutiny on the role of athletics in learning institutions. Vitaly, the fiscal stresses on schools – especially high schools – have meant an increasing emphasis on whether sports in high school serve to complement or substitute academics in school. To that effect, the article seeks to determine whether participation in athletics positively impacts students' academic outcomes or whether sports serve as a somewhat zero-sum undertaking. That is, where time spent on different extra-curricular sporting activities hinders effective learning.

In the study, Yeung (2013) employs an instrumental variable strategy to ascertain the relationship between athletics and academic achievement and the relationship between athletic leadership and academic achievement. The study finds that participation in high school sports positively impacts academic achievement, as obtained from performance on cognitive test scores. Interestingly, African Americans and Hispanic students appeared to benefit less from participation in athletics compared to their White peers. Moreover, male athletes appeared to have an advantage in academic achievement compared to female students (Yeung, 2013). The findings thus indicate that though there is a public benefit to be obtained from participation in athletics in terms of students' academic performance, the effect is not universal in terms of its scale. Furthermore, the study finds that leadership in athletics offers great benefits to academic achievement – more than athletics participation (Yeung, 2013). In serving as leaders of athletics teams, students obtain valuable skills, including teamwork, time management, and organisational skills, which are integral in improving the level of achievement in the classroom.

Esquivel, A., Haque, S., Keating, P., Marsh, S., & Lemos, S. (2013). Concussion Management, Education, and Return-to-Play Policies in High Schools. *Sports Health: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 5(3), 258-262.

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/1941738113476850>.

The journal article addresses concussion among college and high school students who participate in contact sports, especially American football. In the article, Esquivel et al. (2013) delve into concussion by addressing the role of concussion management in treating different brain trauma injuries, which students might pick up while participating in sports. The article details the statistics relating to brain trauma injuries outlined by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, whereby about 1.6 to 3.8 million concussions occur annually during sports and recreational activities. According to Esquivel et al. (2013), concussion is a complex pathological process in which the brain is affected by a traumatic chemical process. Considering that millions of adolescents and young adults participate in high school and college sports annually, they are all at risk of injuries. Concussions contribute to 11 per cent and 6 per cent of sports-related injuries in high school and college sports annually. As a result of the significantly higher proportion of students participating in sports, the number of concussions being detected has grown significantly – by as much as 20 per cent over the past two decades.

Hence, with the higher and more competitive participation in high school and college sports, sports management teams should prioritise the promotion of concussion awareness, management, and prevention in schools. Furthermore, to offer better detection and treatment of concussion, the report proposes that there should be a clear concussion policy produced by physicians, coaches, trainers, and all other stakeholders (Esquivel et al., 2013). In addition, all staff members should be trained on what they should do in the event of a head injury, based on the

guidelines formulated by the school, on effective management of concussions (Esquivel et al., 2013). Importantly, to illustrate the aspect of concussion management practices within learning institutions, the study determined that the top four sports that showed the highest rates of concussion exposure include boys' football, boys' soccer, girls' hockey and soccer. Furthermore, on the awareness front, the study found discrepancies in concussion awareness among the students surveyed, whereby concussion education was widespread in football but hardly exercised in hockey and soccer.

Nite, C., & Bopp, T. (2015). Conflicting prescriptions for 'ethical' leadership in complex institutions: Perspectives from US collegiate athletic administrators. *Leadership*, 13(3), 368-387.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015605878>

The article seeks to illustrate how institutional complexity within college athletics in the US provides conflicting prescriptions for undertaking ethical leadership. According to Nite & Bopp (2015), institutional complexity is when the actors in institutions come across incompatible behavioural expectations emanating from various institutional logics, which specify how society should function. Participants in the study indicated that in college athletics, ethical leadership entailed prioritising the institution and integrating servant leadership. In the article, Nite & Bopp (2015) analyse the conceptual incompatibility of the two logics. Thus, they tend to create perspectives that conflict with what it means to be an ethical leader. By incorporating the logic perspective of an institution, the study demonstrates that various conceptions of ethical leadership get subjected to different engrained ideas, which may not always be compatible since they present themselves to varying ethical frameworks.

The article outlines instances through which institutional complexity may arise in an institution, for example, in organisations that operate with multiple institutions. In such a case, the various institutions will probably feature different logic and prescriptions for governance. By leveraging a purposive criterion, techniques to identify and recruit participants, the study implemented interpretive and qualitative research methods to get a clearer understanding of how institutional complexity complicates concepts of ethical leadership in college athletics (Nite & Bopp, 2015). The study determines that athletic administrators in certain instances unknowingly perpetuate a flawed system of amateur athletics within the collegiate level due to their inability to balance the needs of the institution and those of student-athletes, and increasingly, outside stakeholders within the global sports industry. Consequently, there is a need to clarify the mission of college athletics to offer clearer expectations on what should constitute ethical behaviour.

References

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