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Future research directions for sport education: toward an entrepreneurial learning approach

Future
research
directions for
sport education

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to introduce an entrepreneurial learning approach to the study of sport education in order to inform future research directions.

Design/methodology/approach – Sport education needs to focus on how it can overcome existing barriers to bring a more interdisciplinary approach. This paper uses entrepreneurship education theory to explore the changes required in sport education provision to create a more relevant and conducive teaching environment.

Findings – The findings of this paper suggest that by bringing sport students into contact with entrepreneurship education, aids in the development of improved employability and social skills.

Research limitations/implications – Introducing entrepreneurship education into sport will help the students develop learning initiatives that advance the scholarship of sport education within the university sector.

Practical implications – The benefits of including entrepreneurship education in sport studies could be of interest to the directors of education wanting to increase student enrollments and interest in their courses.

Originality/value – The study suggests ways to offer more interdisciplinary courses and activities linking entrepreneurship education to sport. This needs to be taken into consideration as it will enable the development of sport entrepreneurship education that improves links between academic research with policy and business initiatives.

Keywords Education, Entrepreneurship education, Sport education

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

Entrepreneurial capabilities are becoming important in the workforce due to more students starting their own businesses (Maritz, 2017). Interest in entrepreneurship education is growing amongst sport educators due to the belief that it can improve employment outcomes. The sport industry is by nature entrepreneurial and has a tradition of introducing innovations that transcend to other industries (Ratten, 2011), Ratten and Ratten (2011) identify that sport firms need to be entrepreneurial to stay ahead of their competition. Thus, sport and entrepreneurship are linked in their focus on curiosity and commitment to learning. Sport organizations need to be more involved in entrepreneurial activity due to its positive impact on performance. Entrepreneurship education provides a way for the sports industry to understand change by focusing on intellectual inquiry (Kurzewska *et al.*, 2017).

There is a changing perception within most educational settings regarding the requirements for more practical engagement with subject topics. Entrepreneurship education provides a way of incorporating a more practical orientation to sport studies. This is because there is a belief that sport education should involve more business dimensions and entrepreneurship education can provide this additional knowledge. There is now increased interest in sport education that links to emerging topic areas such as holistic wellness and alternative leisure settings such as yoga and meditation (Gerdin and Pringle, 2017). Despite this shift in change for sport education to date, minimal research has been completed that links the field of entrepreneurship education and how to teach using a more



entrepreneurial approach (Jones and Jones, 2014). Although the role of entrepreneurship in sport is undeniable, the research has neglected to focus on educational aspects. The purpose of this paper is to explore how sport education needs to adopt an entrepreneurial learning process to maximize its ability to enable change.

In the global economy, educators are being required to operate more entrepreneurially in their teaching style and offering of courses. Siedentop (2002, p. 411) states that sport education is defined “as a process through which sport cultures might grow and prosper as humanizing influences in the lives of nations and their citizens.” Typically sport education courses have not traditionally taught entrepreneurship which is often viewed as a standalone discipline in itself. Entrepreneurship education teaches opportunity recognition, risk assessment and creativity (Fayolle, 2010). Traditionally sport educators have focused on physical initiatives neglecting the business aspects of sport. Recent years have witnessed the introduction of entrepreneurial policies in government directives aimed at the sport sector. This has been evident in the use of social initiatives such as having healthier lifestyles adopting a new approach. Thus, social entrepreneurship in sport has been viewed as a way to build more non-profit but innovative partnerships amongst stakeholders in the sport sector (Ratten, 2011).

Organizational socialization is part of sport education as it involves the process of learning about how to teach. Sport education has tended to have a culture that favors preserving the status quo due to entrenched teaching methods being deemed as reliable (Houlihan and Green, 2006). This has discouraged the use of more innovative and novel teaching styles in sport that incorporate entrepreneurship. This conflicts with the current sports industry ecosystem that requires innovation and creativity to progress. By incorporating entrepreneurship into sport education, it will benefit teaching and the use of more progressive learning methods. The sport education sector is an important part of the global economy and contributes to other parts of society (Kirk, 2010). There has been an increase in the availability of online and more flexible forms of sport courses to cater for the changing needs of the workforce. As part of this evolution, there has been a need to change the curriculum in sport education to reflect emerging areas of interest like entrepreneurship.

Creating an entrepreneurial sport education program is not easy, as there needs to be a shift in philosophical understanding regarding the role of innovation in sport. To succeed, sport educators must embrace entrepreneurship as a way to integrate new thinking. A culture of entrepreneurship is required in sport education in order to alter the existing structures and mindset. This paper provides a timely opportunity to examine the use of entrepreneurship education in sport. It is envisioned that sport education will increasingly take an entrepreneurship perspective that will develop over time. Entrepreneurship education is especially important in sport as technology innovations are changing the way sport is viewed and played.

This paper is structured as follows. First, the literature on entrepreneurship education is reviewed that highlights the increased interest in practical and creative training skills. Thereafter, the role of education in sport is discussed that highlights the need for an interdisciplinary perspective. An entrepreneurial learning approach is then introduced that is linked to sport education. The key findings of having an entrepreneurial learning approach to sport education are then stated. Finally, the paper concludes with how future sport education research needs to incorporate entrepreneurial learning. The implications for practice are stated with the limitations necessitating future research addressed.

Entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship involves a process of creative destruction that replaces old practices with new ideas (Formica, 2002). Greater emphasis is placed on entrepreneurship in the society as it focuses on the principles of innovation and change (Acs and Audretsch, 2005).

This change provides a way for communities to capitalize on the ideas that lead to economic and social growth. Entrepreneurship education teaches people about the benefits of change and the role of innovation (Maritz and Brown, 2013). Part of entrepreneurship education involves learning about how to recognize opportunities. This includes fostering interaction and networking activity amongst members of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Students learn about marketable skills that are important when establishing business ventures (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). This involves assessing risk by evaluating potential outcomes of the entrepreneurship.

Formica (2002, p. 173) states “entrepreneurship can be represented as a puzzle, the main pieces of which are training and education, research, application, production, marketing and sales.” The education component of entrepreneurship is the focus of this paper in terms of how it links to the sport context. Individuals that have more intense emotions of joy and positivity can utilize these to be entrepreneurs. Attributes involve being open to new ideas that require a sense of inquisitiveness. This enables individuals to build relationships based on their ability to share ideas (Pittaway and Cope, 2007). There has been an increase in educational institutions creating environments that are conducive to the teaching of entrepreneurship. Part of the reasons for this is that entrepreneurship education teaches students about entrepreneurial capacity, which includes motivations and attributes (Formica, 2002). Motivations include having autonomy and self-confidence that enables the ability to conduct certain tasks. In addition, it includes thinking for oneself by utilizing independence to conduct risk-taking activities.

There is an ongoing debate regarding the effects of entrepreneurship education with some suggesting a positive relationship whilst others highlighting those intentions can decrease after studying entrepreneurship (Von Graevenitz *et al.*, 2010; Jones, Pickernell, Fisher and Netana, 2017). Individuals with a higher entrepreneurial intention are likely to study entrepreneurship. This is due to students interested in entrepreneurship seeking courses that teach them business venture skills. Globally, there has been a significant increase in entrepreneurship education within the educational system (Packham *et al.*, 2010), Formica (2002, p. 168) defines entrepreneurial communities as “communities in which small business founders have formed a free, self-catalyzing network whose members act like a flock of birds, aligning with one another and flying in formation.” This definition is useful for sport communities as the analogy to birds also applies. This is due to sport communities requiring stakeholders to work together by forming networks based on cooperation.

There has been an increase in teaching entrepreneurship as a process to share practical knowledge. This has been driven by the increased interest from the students in self-employment and start-ups as a career. Entrepreneurship education incorporates more practical training that helps both self-employment and employment career paths. This is important with the transient nature of the current employment market with individuals typically experiencing several different jobs and roles during their careers (Jones, Pickernell, Fisher and Netana, 2017). Formica (2002) highlights how the major focus on education is no longer just on post-high school college students but non-traditional working adult students. Entrepreneurship education is defined as “knowledge transfer, regarding how, by whom, and with what effects, opportunities to create future goods and services, are discovered, evaluated and exploited” (Balan *et al.*, 2017, p. 1). When an individual gets taught entrepreneurship, there are changes in their skills set in terms of belief and self-esteem (Ruohotie and Koironen, 2000). This can motivate a person to acquire further knowledge regarding how to develop sport-related business activities. To create a good environment for entrepreneurial learning, there needs to be exposure to different forms of knowledge (Pittaway and Cope, 2007).

Jones and Underwood (2017, p. 657) states “entrepreneurship education and early exposure to (simulated) new venture creation are important determinants in student’s propensity to have a positive attitude towards starting a new business.” Students have

attitudinal change in behavior by studying entrepreneurship. This is the result of entrepreneurship education focusing on teaching students to be creative and independent thinkers. Part of the teaching of entrepreneurship involves students being able to assess risk and forecast future trends (Ramsgaard and Ostergaard, 2017). This helps sport students more effectively position themselves in terms of employability in the marketplace.

There has been more interest in the teaching of entrepreneurship due to its ability to empower individuals and enable them to acquire new skills. Entrepreneurship education is currently a popular topic and is expected to increase in the future (Hagg and Kurczweska, 2016). There are a variety of topics taught in entrepreneurship such as leadership, organizational behavior and finance. This interdisciplinary perspective of entrepreneurship education appeals to sport studies as it brings new skills into the curriculum. There has been a trend toward integrating entrepreneurship education into all disciplines due to the practical nature of its teaching methods.

There is an emphasis on the positive aspects of entrepreneurship although there are negative associations coming from the emphasis on change (Jones and Underwood, 2017). Entrepreneurship might be valued more in the arts and associated disciplines that encourage creativity. In the sport discipline, there is an emphasis on change and innovation due to the need for competition. Shepherd (2004) discusses how entrepreneurship education is an important way students can learn about how to manage their emotions and the role of perseverance in business. This is important as business is increasingly emphasizing the role of failure and experimentation as an effective learning approach.

An important part of entrepreneurship education is in the provocation and different ways of thinking (Hjorth, 2011). It is important for business ventures to have the appropriate educational and managerial support to assist ideas come to fruition. Gibb (2005) suggests there are three major objectives for effective management of entrepreneurship education. First, to develop a improved understanding regarding the role of entrepreneurship in society. As more sport businesses are utilizing technology advancements there should be a growing awareness of the need to be agile and flexible in the marketplace. Second, acquiring an entrepreneurial mindset is important in facilitating creative ideas. Third, there is the key operational knowledge regarding business start-up and growth. For example, increasing numbers of sport students are becoming personal trainers and starting their own businesses due to the evolution in the fitness industry (Jones, Pickernell, Fisher and Netana, 2017).

Sport education

Araujo *et al.* (2017, p. 519) state “sport education is regarded as one of these innovative sport-based pedagogical models.” Sport education focuses more on learning about different roles in sport that occur within teams and matches. Araujo *et al.* (2017, p. 519) state that sport education focuses on different types of roles and “examples of within team roles include coach, equipment manager or fitness leader, while those within match roles include referees, scorekeepers and statisticians.” The student coach is an important part of sport education studies and differs to physical education that focuses more on fitness. Student-coaches involve learning in teams about leadership, strategy and skills (Siedentop *et al.*, 2011). When students act as coaches, then more competence about how different people function in a team can be learnt.

In sport education, there is common and specific content knowledge that is part of the learning experience (Ball *et al.*, 2008). Common content knowledge involves information about rules, tactics and techniques that are important in a sport context (Araujo *et al.*, 2017), whilst specific content knowledge involves more intricate information required to perform a task. Both types of knowledge are essential in sport education as it provides a setting that enables occupational socialization of how to behave in a sport setting (Curtner-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

Farias *et al.* (2017, p. 461) state that sport education provides “cooperative work, shared decision-making, face-to-face interaction and student-led team practice sessions.” This is helpful in the more practical sport environment that requires people to evolve based on consumer demand. Moreover, Parker and Curtner-Smith (2012) suggest that there are still institutional gender stereotypes and conservative teaching methods used in sport education. Thus, there needs to be a change in sport education mindsets to incorporate a more diverse and culturally inclusive curriculum. Carlson and Hastie (1997) in describing sport education state that it differs from physical education due to the emphasis on instructional and managerial leadership. This enables students to develop personal and social skills around delegation, cooperation and commitment that are useful in sport settings. Students are viewing sport education as a way to combine theory and practice that will be useful to them in their careers.

Doyle (1977) proposes an ecological model of dynamic interplay to describe teacher effectiveness. In the ecological model, there are instructional and managerial tasks systems that are utilized in the classroom (Carlson and Hastie, 1997). Instructional task systems relate to how to do something in terms of required steps. This includes teaching specific skills regarding how to do an activity that focuses on the acquisition of knowledge. Managerial task systems involve how to supervise and coordinate people. This is an important behavior to develop as it enables effective delegation and use of people for certain roles.

Sport education contextualizes sport in a more realistic setting than physical education. This helps to see the relationship sport has to other fields and the interlinkages. In addition, it enables an evolutionary approach to sport studies to develop that takes into account emerging business trends. There is an emphasis in sport education on the whole process of sport from the recruitment of players to post-career education. This enables sport to be viewed from multiple perspectives including athlete, coach, spectator and sponsor.

Recent research by Gerdin and Pringle (2017, p. 194) states physical education “is failing to achieve its educational aims and is in need of radical reform or is at risk of educational extinction.” Kirk (2010) has suggested that sport education is limited by having a socially irrelevant approach to current business trends. This has resulted in the changing environment in which there is a greater diversity of sport-related activities not being included in the current education methods.

Sport education is important to society and there has been significant financial investment in developing sport-related curriculum (Houlihan and Green, 2006), Curtner-Smith *et al.* (2008) suggest that there is an attraction to sport education because of its cultural and structural superiority in terms of teaching method. Siedentop (2002) describes sport education as a curriculum model designed to provide an authentic experience. This means sport is taught in an instructional method that combines a practice perspective and enables more enthusiasm to develop regarding the changing nature of sport in society.

Siedentop (2002) proposes that the main instructional characteristics of sport education are: managerial routines, duty teams, peer teaching, cooperative planning and conflict resolution mechanisms. Managerial routines involve teaching students about how to assign tasks and people in a sport context. This helps develop skills regarding the role of different team members in a sports organization. Duty teams involve teaching students the role of players, referees and scorekeepers. This assists individuals learn about different types of skills from the player, coach and umpire perspective in sport. Peer teaching involves students supporting each other to learn sport skills. This is valued because it enables the members of similar social systems to collectively acquire knowledge and skills about sport. Cooperative planning involves making decisions about time and resources needed for sport. This is important in facilitating competition by providing the necessary information and help. Conflict resolution mechanisms involve students learning to negotiate and manage different perspectives.

Sport education and entrepreneurship

The decontextualisation of sport means there is a significant requirement for change and a way to do achieve is by focusing on entrepreneurship education by rethinking the sport education curriculum and how it can grow and develop to suit industry demands. Sport is a culture that is important to the collective social life of a community (Siedentop, 2002). Minimal attention has been paid to the role of entrepreneurship education in sport curriculum. There is still much to learn regarding how to incorporate effective entrepreneurial learning into sport education studies. There is a requirement for practical guidance on how sport can utilize entrepreneurship in the curriculum. Thus, sport education is at risk of decreasing in popularity and value unless it incorporates new pedagogical thinking and approaches such as entrepreneurship education. The need to introduce more entrepreneurship education into sport studies is due to the lacks of current consideration and the evolution of the sports industry. This enables students to learn about how to develop resilience and overcome boundaries. Exposure to entrepreneurship education can enable sport students to reconsider their projected careers to focus more on self-sufficiency and self-employment. Entrepreneurship education can facilitate innovation which is required to revolutionize the sport industry and encourage dynamic growth.

Moreover, there needs to be more sport education on entrepreneurship in order to disseminate best practices regarding the role of business start-up. Students can learn about how to be self-sufficient in the job market by acquiring entrepreneurship skills. Moreover, entrepreneurship education increases student's confidence about managing their career through introducing new skills and knowledge. This helps them gain independence and a sense of certainty regarding career progression. As students learn more about entrepreneurship their attitudes and intentions toward business change.

The existing knowledge regarding the role of entrepreneurship education in sport is minimal due to the lack of extant research. There has been increased interest in sport education acquiring an entrepreneurship perspective due to the competitive dynamics at play in the global business environment (Beynon *et al.*, 2014). In addition, there are more sport graduates taking entrepreneurial career paths from athletes developing businesses to coaches studying management courses. The post-graduate sport education market is made up of many experienced individuals seeking to link practice to theory. A way to do this is by integrating entrepreneurship education into sport. Programs that enable a more dynamic understanding about sport talent management through entrepreneurship education are required.

Sport educators are facing a changing teaching context due to different expectations from stakeholders. Students want to see engaged teachers who utilize educational technologies in an innovative way. In addition, students are becoming increasingly transactional with an expectation of high graduate program outcomes and the guarantee of well numerated employment post program (Jones *et al.*, 2013). Communities desire teachers that can address the demands of the business and social environment. Institutions seek to utilize teachers that can incorporate the schools mission and vision statements. A method to address these disparate stakeholder requirements is for sport educators to utilize entrepreneurship education. This helps associate sports to the market knowledge and prepares students for industry changes. Providing entrepreneurship education in the sport curriculum will increase student satisfaction, achievement and program value. This is important in facilitating innovative teaching methods in the sport context and achieving improved learning outcomes and student experience.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing entrepreneurial attitudes that enable improved usage of skills to initiate a new business start-up (Fayolle, 2010). This is important for sport students developing personal qualities that facilitate an entrepreneurial mindset. Sport education research requires updated contextualization with an entrepreneurial underpinning in order to maintain relevance. Entrepreneurship education is a legitimate method of teaching practical skills that has applicability to sport studies.

Entrepreneurship education provides a dynamic learning experience due to its approach being cross-disciplinary (Shinnar *et al.*, 2009). Entrepreneurship education is appropriate to sport due to its student-centered learning approach and focus on opportunity evaluation. There is more emphasis on entrepreneurship education and critical reflection that links well to the practical nature of sport education. In the sport industry, there has been an increase in the usage of casual and contract workers that has meant more people having the opportunity to work on a self-employed basis (Jones, Jones, Williams-Burnett and Ratten, 2017). This has meant more people in the sport industry are required to become self-employed to service the evolving demands of the industry. This has led to increased interest in entrepreneurship education as a mechanism to meet the challenges of the sport industry. Within the current sport curriculum there are concerns whether training about entrepreneurship is sufficiently covered. Thus, in order to gain an increased insight into how sport education needs to evolve, this paper will focus on how to effectively incorporate entrepreneurship education.

The aim of entrepreneurship education in sport is to develop personal attributes that effectively prepare students for the workforce or self-employment. This includes skills that include being resourceful that will equip students with the know how to succeed in the marketplace. The lack of entrepreneurship education in sport could be due to less understanding regarding its relevance. In addition, there is a general misunderstanding regarding what sport entrepreneurship is due to its only recent emergence within the university sector. This means there is a gap in the current sport education curriculum that can be filled by entrepreneurship studies. Ecosystems are important in the development of entrepreneurship education (Maritz, 2017). This is due to each part of the education experience affecting other sectors of the learning system. This is relevant for sport policy that often aims at having a more inclusive society through the funding of sport programs. More regions are focusing on sport as a way to support citizens but also encourage a healthier lifestyle. At the heart of entrepreneurial ecosystems are universities that teach sport studies and facilitate regional policies. Universities are encouraging more sport start-ups due to the role sport has in society and necessity to produce viable business start-ups. To do this, human capital is required and this can be developed through sport education programs that integrate entrepreneurship. Universities that have accelerator programs and incubators can tap into the sport market by linking research to practical requirements. This enables technology to be transferred in a way that develops self-efficacy and enterprise skills.

Recent education initiatives around entrepreneurship have necessitated its usage in a sport context. Entrepreneurship is relevant to sport due to the changes occurring in the global business environment (Beynon *et al.*, 2014). The field of sport education requires more theoretical frameworks to take an entrepreneurial approach. This will aid in developing an improved understanding regarding the role of entrepreneurship in sport education. This paper paves the way for advancing knowledge on entrepreneurial ecosystems in the sport education context. The connectivity between sport education and entrepreneurship offers an enhanced context for students. Novel insights regarding sport education and entrepreneurship may enable an enhanced curriculum to emerge.

There is a plethora of research regarding sport education yet a lack of linkage to the entrepreneurship literature. Taking an entrepreneurial perspective to sport education will enable a new dynamic approach to encourage engagement with students. There are significant benefits for both students and teachers from incorporating entrepreneurship into sport education. It is important that sport education aligns theory to teaching practice. This can be conducted through emphasizing entrepreneurial practice, which is increasingly prominent in the sport industry.

Maritz and Brown (2013) suggest entrepreneurship education programs consist of seven major components: context, outcomes, objectives, assessment, content, audiences and pedagogy. This is evident in the use of business plans in entrepreneurship classes to teach

students how to develop sport ventures. The objectives of entrepreneurship education align to a sport context as they focus on real-life examples and experiential learning. This is linked to assessment outcomes in entrepreneurship education focusing on the relevance of projects to real life. Thus, the content of entrepreneurship education courses is biased toward novel ways of thinking about future business practices. This is important in the sport industry that prides itself on utilizing innovation. The audiences of entrepreneurship pedagogy are the students who need to learn new innovations in order to succeed in their working life. Thus, entrepreneurship education can provide a guide as to the forthcoming innovations in sport.

Implications for policy and practice

This paper has several implications for policy and practice. Sport policy needs to incorporate more entrepreneurial thinking to enable improved engagement with stakeholders. Sport education needs to introduce entrepreneurship into the teaching of sport students to prepare them for their professional careers. By introducing entrepreneurship education into the educational experience of sport students, it will help improve their professional development. The teaching experience will benefit from an orientation toward entrepreneurship education as a way to more effectively prepare students for the job market. A deeper insight into how sport students can utilize entrepreneurship education is required. Entrepreneurship education provides value to sport students in supporting alternative career paths. As sport education tends to be a specialized field, it is important to integrate emerging teaching methods such as entrepreneurship education. The outcome-based approach of entrepreneurship education focuses on practicality. The sport context is a user of technological advancements such as mobile commerce to purchase tickets to sporting events and the use of technology to enhance decision making. Thus, technology innovation has changed the way sport is consumed in society. This enables entrepreneurship education to contextualize the sport environment to teach relevant skills.

Future research

This study broadens our understanding of the entrepreneurial learning process in sport and the interplay with sport education. However, the paper recognizes the limitations of the conceptual approach that requires further theoretical and empirical underpinning. Further longitudinal evidence regarding how entrepreneurship is embedded in sport education is required. There is potentially a bias toward entrepreneurship education in sport due to the growing recognition of sport as a business. Further qualitative and case study data are required to evidence how sport educators are effectively utilizing entrepreneurship. Thus, there is a requirement for further contextual studies evaluating the sport environment in facilitating entrepreneurship education. This would include evaluating the success of entrepreneurship education in different sports including amateur and professional contexts.

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