A Retrospective of Sport Management Education Journal: The Evolution and Content of the First 20 Issues

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Sport Management Education Journal (SMEJ) published its inaugural issue in 2007 and published its 20th issue in 2020. The journal published annually for its first eight years and then became a bi-annual publication in 2015. The aim of the journal is to promote and advance the body of knowledge in pedagogy as it relates to sport management education as well as serve as a venue for the dissemination of that research. This presentation will focus on the evolution, development, and content of the articles published in Sport Management Education Journal as it surpassed its 20th issue.

It is important to historically examine a journal as it continues to publish as an attempt to capture a snapshot of the journal’s content (Vince & Elkjaer, 2009). Pitts (2002) noted in her historical examination of Sport Marketing Quarterly that “journals provide the vehicles for academics to simultaneously create and disseminate an archive of the body of knowledge” that will be a “collection of work upon which the future” of sport management education, in this case, will be built (p. 90). Research journals “represent the most widely accepted means of communicating knowledge” in the discipline (Cardinal & Thomas, 2005, p. S123). It is an appropriate time to examine the content of SMEJ as well as the development of the journal as it continues to offer researchers a voice and publishing outlet in sport management education.

The journal has evolved during the past 14 years and added sections on Pedagogical Innovations as well as serving as an outlet for publication for extended abstracts from NASSM’s Teaching and Learning Fair. Both of these sections were added to further the goals of the journal in providing information related to sport management pedagogy. The third special issue of the journal was published in 2020 with a fourth special issue planned for 2021. The journal has been under the stewardship of five different editors during the past 14 years with the sixth editor scheduled to assume leadership in 2021.

There have been more than 140 items published in the journal since its inception, ranging from research articles to pedagogical innovations to book reviews. A thematic analysis of articles was conducted where each article was coded for its content. The codes were assigned codes based on content from the article’s abstract.

The thematic analysis showed more than 30% of the articles focused on experiential learning which includes the internship experience or other capstone projects. Another prevalent topic area was articles related to teaching (29%) which included topics such as curriculum development, strategies, virtual learning, and specific class content. Other relevant topical areas were faculty issues, student learning, and professional preparation.

Sport Management Education Journal continues to evolve, and it is imperative to understand how that evolution unfolds. Nearly 60% of the published content covers experiential learning and teaching, which leaves room for the journal’s content to expand to even greater depths within sport management education and pedagogy.