



Book Review Terri Byers, *Contemporary Issues in Sport Management: A Critical Introduction*. Sage Publications Ltd: London, 2016. ISBN 978-1-4462-8219-9 (pbk)

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Contemporary Issues in Sport Management: A Critical Introduction is an edited textbook that brings together 35 chapters written by a combination of over 50 academic experts and industry professionals. As an industry, sport management has grown exponentially in recent years. Thus, Terri Byers' attempt to integrate many of the pressing issues facing the sector into a comprehensive textbook is certainly a timely venture. The book is aimed at both students and practitioners - while its purpose is to provide the reader not only with a robust understanding of what the important issues are, but to encourage them to think about solutions and the implications of their decisions as aspiring sport managers. Two core arguments are prevalent throughout the book. First, sport management faces issues on multiple levels (global, national and organisational). Second, these issues do not operate independently, and it is therefore prudent to understand the industry from an interconnected and multi-level perspective.

The book adopts a pragmatic structure that complements its core arguments. Content is divided into three main sections: global, national and organisational issues. Organising the book in this way enables the reader to conceptualise the multi-level nature of sport management with clarity. Each issue is positioned coherently in the text with other corresponding topics that exist on the same level of analysis. In order to emphasise how the issues are interrelated, key concepts that overlap in other chapters are highlighted in bold throughout the text. This allows the book to maintain a degree of continuity that is often amiss in edited works.

Individual chapters follow a consistent template. Three quotations are supplied at the start of each chapter to illustrate the significance of the topic in the media. 'Specific



Learning Outcomes' are subsequently provided outlining the knowledge you should gain from the chapter, followed by a brief introduction. 'Case Studies' or 'Thinking Points' are then included in an attempt to contextualise the issue. This is supported by a discussion of relevant theories, under the heading 'Tools for Analysis', which assists in developing a deeper understanding of the contemporary issue and how it might be explained or managed. An 'Action Learning' section is then put forward prompting the reader to think critically about the issue and consider challenging questions sport managers may face. Incorporating these different components helps to achieve a more functional textbook, which students and practitioners will be able to engage with to a greater extent than traditionally styled textbooks.

Part one of the textbook, global issues, presents the "big picture" in sport management and discusses a range of issues that affect virtually all sport organisations across the globe. Generally, topics in this section focus on familiar sport management issues such as Ethical Behaviour (chapter 6), Politics and Sport Governance (chapter 7) and International Sport Law (chapter 8). However, the modernised content aids the chapters in achieving a contemporary feel that is particularly interesting from an equality and diversity perspective. Chapter 12, Animals in Sport, is an excellent addition to the textbook that confronts an under-researched subject. The use of animals in sport is a controversial issue that is being increasingly debated throughout the world. As such, its inclusion in the book gives credence to its claim of being truly contemporary.

Part two introduces national issues that manifest differently across countries and highlights cultural considerations with respect to the management of sport. Sport Participation (chapter 15), Gambling (chapter 20) and Match Fixing (chapter 22) have been some of the most topical issues in sport in recent years and represent worthwhile chapter topics. Moreover, chapters on Gender (chapter 17) and Disability in Sport (chapter 23) are refreshing additions. These chapters examine several prominent debates currently happening in the sport sector related to equality and inclusivity - thus demonstrating the book's awareness of important problems facing the industry.



Part three assesses sport management at the micro-level, focusing on what happens inside different types of sport organisations. The issues covered in this section are largely multi-disciplinary – ranging from sociology to marketing and business ethics. Topics in this section are akin to issues that sport managers encounter on a day-to-day basis, and so they offer useful insights regarding what is required to run a successful sport organisation. Chapters on Social Media Challenges (chapter 25) and Managing Social Media in Sport (chapter 26) provide a valuable analysis of a relatively new phenomenon and further illustrate the book's effectiveness in covering a broad range of contemporary issues. Sexuality (chapter 29) represents another little talked about subject in the sport industry and is a highly relevant inclusion.

The overall strength of the book lies in its versatility, with both students and practising sport managers well placed to gain value from it. For students, the 'Tools for Analysis' component in individual chapters is particularly useful, as it equips them with a basis for understanding academic theories and how they can be applied to specific sport management issues. This may act as inspiration for dissertation topics and will help to improve students' theoretical reasoning skills. For practitioners, the 'Action Learning' sections present an active opportunity to think critically about various issues they may face in their future careers and develop their professional competence in the process.

Two notable criticisms can be made of the book. First, there is an inconsistency in quality between some of the chapters. Whereas the discussion of relevant theories is strong in the chapters on Gender (chapter 17) and Sexuality (chapter 29), it is weak in Disability in Sport (chapter 23). In some chapters, there was no discernible theory cited (such as the Disability chapter). In others, theoretical discussion was poor and it was unclear how exactly it could be applied to the issue in question (e.g. chapter 15, Sport Participation). Moreover, some of the theories discussed throughout the textbook are basic by nature. Although, as an introductory text, that is perhaps appropriate. The second criticism relates to the 'Action Learning' component. This section was beneficial from a practical perspective, but did not offer the same usefulness in terms of analysing theory. Further 'Action Learning' questions encouraging the reader to



consider how theory may apply to specific issues would further improve the functionality of the textbook.

Despite those shortcomings, *Contemporary Issues in Sport Management* is a high quality textbook that offers value to a wide-ranging audience in an innovative and easily digestible style. The book's structure, which divides the content onto three levels, makes it easy for the reader to grasp the interconnected and multi-level nature of sport management. The editor asserts that it is the first book specifically devoted to discussing contemporary issues in sport. A focus on topics such as Gender, Sexuality and Disability certainly gives the textbook a modern semblance - and will appeal to those who are interested in the equality and diversity of the sport industry. Such issues have often been overlooked in more established sport management textbooks (e.g. Hoye et al (2015) and Masteralexis and Hums (2011), which represents a unique selling point for Terri Byers' edited piece.

References

Hoye, R. Smith, A. C. Nicholson, M. Stewart, B. (2015). *Sport Management: Principles and Applications*. Routledge.

Masteralexis, L. Barr, C. Hums, M. (2011). *Principles and Practice of Sport Management*. Jones & Bartlett Publishers.