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Perceptions among Sport Managers toward Sport Management Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Background: The perceptions of the local sport managers are vital, as they are the real actors in local sport management at the ground level. They are the people on the field, executing the policies into practice. As such there is a necessity for this study to inform future policy promulgation process on sport management development such as in sport human resource, sport management curriculum as well as research and development. 412 sport managers were involved in this survey, and the population was drawn from the sport practitioners' involved in the management of Malaysian sports governing bodies. Four main clusters in eighteen knowledge dimension was put in place. **Objective:** The purpose of the current study is to: First, to ascertain the local sport practitioners' perceptions on the knowledge necessary to perform managerial roles. Second, to determine the interrelationship between the perceptions of sport management knowledge dimension and the requisites of the local sport industry. **Results:** End of the study found that, the sport managers stated subjects such as Sport Administration, Sport Finance, Ethics and Governance as well as Sport Marketing as top essential subjects. Subjects such as Physiology and Coaching were considered as less important for local sport managers. **Conclusion:** To conclude, in order to improve sport management academic programme, these 4 subject area should be emphasize strongly and to be evaluated concurrently in the process of preparing the sport management graduates for employment.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth in the global sport industry sets off a 'ripple effect' on the local sport sectors. More modern sport facilities are being built to cater for the demands of hosting an international event locally. This in turn creates more job and business opportunities in addition to generating more funds for the local economy. In this respect, the operation and management of today's local sport industry has turn out to be more advanced and requires extensive knowledge and skill. The industry demands that human resources are professionally prepared for the job and academically educated to function effectively in a variety of sport settings, Megat Daud M.A.K *et al.* (2013). According to Pitts & Stotlar (2002) several factors can be identified as contributing to the growth of the global sport consumption. Factors states are issues such as the increasing number of opportunities to engage in sport activities, enhanced mass media exposure, an increased interest in sport tourism and adventure travel and the provision of sport-related goods and services for a greater variety of market segments. Pitts & Stotlar (2002) further reflects that due to these factors;

...new professional sports have emerged, sport opportunities are being offered to a more diverse population, endorsements and sponsorships are on the rise, sport industry education is becoming more prevalent and sophisticated, marketing and promotion orientation is growing in the sport industry, sport managers are becoming more competent, and the globalisation of the sport industry is progressing rapidly.

Besides, the success of the sport industry is linked to professional human resources Chelladurai (2001). According to Parks *et al.* (1998) Sport Management exist in two forms; first, Professional Endeavour – a multitude of professional career paths that are available in current job market. Second, Professional Academic Preparation – academic pursuits in higher education institutions in the form of major courses as preparation for the professional career paths Parks *et al.* (1998).

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Research Method:

The perceptions of the local sport managers are vital, as they are the real actors in local sport management at the ground level. They are the people on the field, executing the policies into practice. As such there is a necessity for this study to inform future policy promulgation process on sport management development such as in sport human resource, sport management curriculum as well as research and development. The purpose of the current study is to:

1. Ascertain the local sport practitioners' perceptions on the knowledge necessary to perform managerial roles;
2. Determine the interrelationship between the perceptions of sport management knowledge dimension and the requisites of the local sport industry

The study targets the local sport management volunteers involved in the management of Malaysian sports governing bodies. The research population was drawn from the sport practitioners' population throughout the country. The South China Sea divides Malaysia into two geographical regions; namely the West (Peninsular) and East Malaysia. The questionnaire survey was intended for sport management office bearers of all sport associations at the national and state levels registered under the Sport Commissioners' Office, the Ministry of Youth and Sport Malaysia. A total of 2300 questionnaires were issued out and the rate of return is 26%. For the purpose of this research questionnaires were distributed to sport associations in West Malaysia only. This is because the requirement for sport associations to register under the law only applies to associations based in West Malaysia.

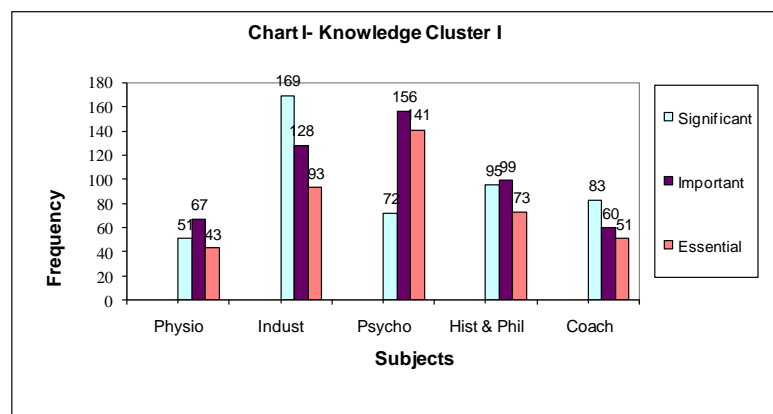
The research instrument was based on the previous joint research conducted by SPRITO (The National Training Organisation for Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations) and SCLRS (the UK Higher Education Standing Conference on Leisure, Recreation and Sport) (Hanson, 1998), NASPEE – NASSM Protocol and ILAM. Previous studies on managerial role in sport (Ellinger, 1999); Horch, (2002); Lizandra, (1993); Quarterman, (1994); Quick, (1997) were also referred to in the preparation of the instrument.

Findings and Discussion:

In the instrument, perceptions of the required knowledge of a sport manager are done in a close-ended format, with options to answer on a six-point Likert Scale. Eighteen knowledge dimension areas were put forth in the questionnaires for the practitioners to select. For the purpose of this article, only the last three perceptions (Significant, Important, Essential) would be discussed. The perceptions of the sport practitioners of the required knowledge are presented according to four main cluster as follows ($N = 412$):

- Cluster I (subjects Physiology, Industry, Psychology, History and Philosophy)
- Cluster II (subjects Marketing, Sport Specific, Business, Finance and First Aid)
- Cluster III (subjects Legal Aspects, Public Relations, Sport Administration, Internship)
- Cluster IV (subjects Event and Facilities Management, Human Resources Management, Research and Development, Ethics and Governance)

The above chart shows that the relevant areas of knowledge for a sport manager in Cluster I were sport industry and psychology. It is interesting to note that psychology is considered as an important subject area compared to a sport performance specific subject such as coaching theories and practice by the practitioners. This inclination is probably due to the function of psychological aspects of knowledge in the human resources



areas of managing sport such as motivating others in sport organisation workforce. In addition, the sport managers consider sport industry subject as significant for a local sport manager to possess compared to physiology and coaching subjects. Sport Industry is a subject that deals with the theories and practices in the sport industry and its development.

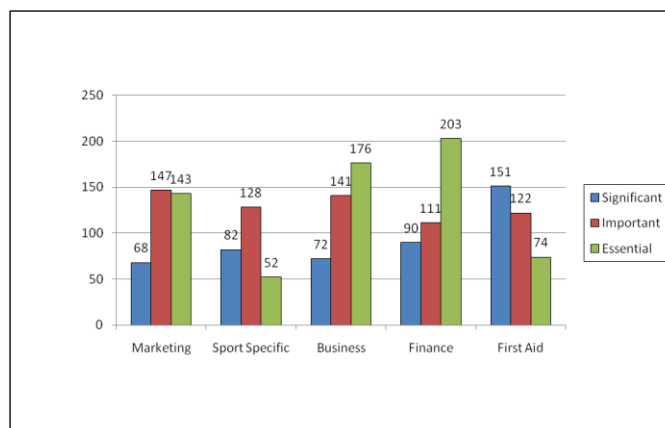
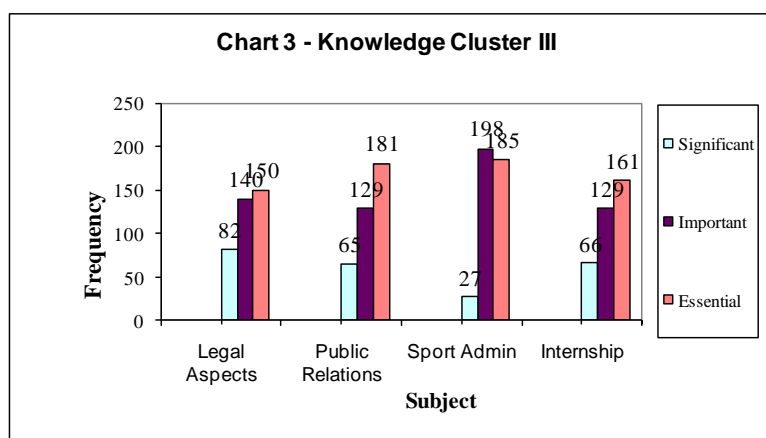


Chart 2: Knowledge Cluster II.

In Cluster II, the respondents perceived that finance, marketing and business knowledge as important subject areas to sport managers. The most essential, according to the sport managers are Finance, followed by Business and Marketing. Business-related subjects are considered important by the practitioners here and this seems to reflect their understanding of the management aspects of a sport organisation that is in general are about fiscal management and sound financial decisions. The knowledge about sport-specific subject is considered important by the sport managers. First Aid as a subject is perceived as a significant subject for a local sport manager to possess.



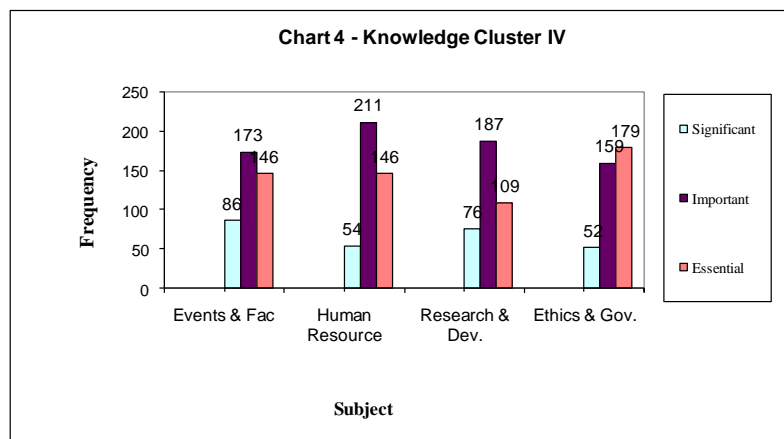
In this chart, the respondents perceived that all four subjects (Legal Aspects of Sports, Public Relations, Sport Administration and Internship) as essential knowledge dimensions for local sport managers. Sport Administration was top, followed by Public Relations, Internship and Legal Aspects of Sport.

Chart 4 indicated that Ethics and Governance is an essential subject as perceived by the respondents.

Subjects such as Human Resource and Events and Facilities were perceived by the respondents as important knowledge dimensions. Similarly, research and development subject is considered as important knowledge dimensions for local sport managers.

The following table summarizes the knowledge aspect that is perceived as important by the respondents is sport administration from the essential to the less important according to the highest mean within the six degree of Likert Scale.

Clearly, subjects that are core dimensions in sport management is considered essential by the local sport managers. Especially important is Sport Administration, followed by Sport Finance, Human Resources and business-related subjects. Interestingly, Ethics and governance is also perceived as important by the local sport industry player, reflecting the current trends of transparency and accountability in corporate finance that also resonates in sport governance. Interestingly however, based on Table 1, the knowledge of sport industry did not occupy top spot and this may be due to the lack of, albeit growing, awareness of the potentiality of sport in becoming a revenue generating factor in the Malaysian economy among the masses.

**Table 1:** Order of Importance of Knowledge Dimension.

Knowledge (Discipline in Education)	Mean	Std. Dev	Degree of Important (% , Frequency)		
			Significant	Important	Essential
1. Sport Administration	5.37	0.629	6.6 (27)	48.1 (198)	44.9 (185)
2. Finance	5.24	0.857	21.8 (90)	26.9 (111)	49.3 (203)
3. Human Resources	5.22	0.670	13.1 (54)	51.2 (211)	35.4 (146)
4. Ethics & Sport Governance	5.20	0.858	12.6 (52)	38.6 (159)	43.8 (179)
5. Business	5.14	0.899	17.5 (72)	34.2 (141)	42.7 (176)
6. Facilities & Events Management	5.11	0.787	20.9 (86)	42.0 (173)	35.4 (146)
7. Public Relations	5.10	0.629	15.8 (65)	31.3 (129)	43.9 (181)
8. Psychology	4.94	1.009	17.5 (72)	37.9 (156)	34.2 (141)
9. Legal Aspects	4.94	1.047	19.9 (82)	34.0 (140)	36.4 (150)
10. Marketing	4.92	1.016	16.5 (68)	35.7 (147)	34.7 (143)
11. Internship	4.92	1.129	16.0 (66)	31.3 (129)	39.1 (161)
12. Research & Development	4.87	0.959	18.4 (76)	45.4 (187)	26.5 (109)
13. Industry	4.71	0.876	41.0 (169)	31.1 (128)	22.6 (93)
14. First Aid	4.41	1.154	36.7 (151)	29.6 (122)	18.0 (74)
15. Sport Specific	4.24	1.137	19.9 (82)	31.1 (128)	15.0 (62)
16. History & Philosophy of Sport	4.15	1.261	23.1 (95)	24.0 (99)	17.7 (73)
17. Coaching	3.68	1.270	20.1 (83)	14.6 (60)	12.4 (51)
18. Physiology	3.39	1.395	12.4 (4)	16.3 (67)	10.4 (43)

Sources: Questionnaires

Conclusion:

Overall, sport administration as a subject area is perceived as the most important by the respondents, followed by knowledge areas in finance, human resources and ethics and sport governance. Ethics as an area of discipline perceived as important by the respondents is an interesting one, as the subject relates to accountability and transparency of management. The understanding of these knowledge dimensions as perceived by the local sport managers would be able to shed some light into the type of knowledge and skills set expected by the market of the graduates of the sport management academic programme. The sport management academic provider would benefit by constantly reviewing their courses on offer in order to ensure that the graduates would possess all the knowledge that the market requires in order to be able to guarantee work appointment for their graduates.

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