


Chapter 8

Sport as a Driver of Internationalization in Higher Education: A Pathway to Inclusion, Cultural Exchange, and Global Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Sport plays a key role in the internationalization of higher education, acting as a powerful tool for fostering inclusion, cultural exchange, and global engagement. By integrating sport into academic frameworks, universities can bridge cultural gaps, promote diversity, and create a worldwide network of students and scholars. This paper explores how sport facilitates cross-cultural interactions, enhances social inclusion, and boosts the global visibility of educational institutions. Through case studies of universities using sport to promote international engagement, it highlights the benefits of sport in creating inclusive environments and encouraging collaboration. Additionally, it examines how sport-based programs and international events

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stimulate academic mobility and strengthen global partnerships. The paper concludes that sport enriches the educational experience and is a strategic approach to fostering global citizenship in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Internationalization in the context of higher education refers to the process through which universities and educational institutions expand their reach beyond national borders, engaging in global networks of knowledge exchange, collaboration, and student mobility. It encompasses various activities, such as developing international partnerships, offering global curricula, and fostering cross-cultural experiences that enhance students' academic and social dimensions. Internationalization aims to prepare students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world, equipping them with the skills and perspectives necessary for global citizenship, (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015). In recent years, sport has emerged as a powerful and strategic tool for advancing internationalization within higher education. Traditionally seen as a recreational or extracurricular activity, sport is now recognized as a vital mechanism for promoting cross-cultural dialogue, enhancing global engagement, and fostering inclusive educational environments. The universal appeal of sport and its ability to unite people from diverse backgrounds make it an ideal medium for advancing internationalization initiatives. Whether through international sporting events, university sports teams, or collaborative sports programs, sport provides unique opportunities for students to interact, form lasting global networks, and experience cultural exchange firsthand.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CHAPTER

The objectives of this chapter are to examine the growing role of sport in the internationalization of higher education, explore its potential as a driver of inclusion and cultural diplomacy, and position it as a key enabler of global engagement. Specifically, this chapter will highlight how sport facilitates the development of inclusive environments, promotes intercultural understanding, and contributes to the development of global citizenship. It will also explore how universities can strategically integrate sport into their internationalization efforts to foster deeper, more meaningful connections between students and institutions worldwide.

Sport serves as a cross-cutting enabler of inclusion by providing opportunities for individuals from various socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds to come together and participate in shared experiences. Through this process, sports

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