Theory or Practice Which Work for Student View

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It is stated that sport management programs need to cater to employers’ needs for job placement of students. There are currently over 200 sport management programs across North America. Today employers concentrate on practical experiences for potential employees and job placement. Most college and university sport management programs emphasize theoretical frameworks, so it is a conflict of interest for potential employers.

Management education and Masters of Business Administration programs have undergone significant changes to ensure that students can readily provide value in the workplace (Herremans & Murch, 2003). Raelin (1995) proposed a model that used experiential learning to meld professional education (concepts) with action learning (learning by doing). Experiential learning requires recognition of the uniqueness of students and provides opportunity to tap into their personal experiences. Through the integration of an experiential model, instructors have the potential to practice the core values of education, create a richer learning experience, and better prepare students to face real challenges in the work place by incorporating higher levels of learning including analysis, synthesis, decision making, evaluation, and judgment (Bloom, 1956).

In an undergraduate level Sport Administration program, keeping students inspired and motivated is a challenge. Young adults require learning activities that are “life centered” and self-directed (Knowles, 1990). Motivating students requires continual updating and creative conceptualization of course objectives and outcomes. Additionally, accreditation standards in sport management are increasingly more outcomes based rather than curricular. In order for the sport management students of today to be successful, they will have to solve problems that instructors cannot conceptualize today (Keeley, Parks, & Thibault, 2003).

This research will examine the perception of the application of analysis, synthesis, decision making, evaluation, and judgment through various experiential learning activities. Participants included 120 students enrolled in four sport management courses at two universities in the eastern United States, one private and one public. All of the students were assigned a minimum of 10 hours of experiential learning. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from students regarding the perception of value of the various experiential requirements. Survey questionnaires were designed to answer the questions, “Which experiential learning activities were of most value to students in the sport management classroom?”, “What aspects of the experiential learning activity were the most valuable?”, and “Which elements of Bloom’s taxonomy were used most?” Presenters will discuss the various benefits of the experiential learning components of the four courses examined and explore any differences between the two institutions. Which sport management theories were the students able to apply to the experiential learning experience? Finally, the researcher will express how the students viewed the learning experience.