

Analysis of Assessment Methods of Sport Management Programmes in Germany and Implications for Curriculum Development

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Session: Workshop 6: Designing sport management curricula

Aim and Research Questions

The labour market requirements for sport management graduates in Germany have changed considerably during the last two decades. While earlier studies on competency requirements for sport managers highlight professional competencies, most recent research has identified a much greater need for generic competencies in various occupational contexts (Wohlfart, Adam & Hovemann, 2019). The requirements of the labour market, underpinned by the central postulate of the Bologna Declaration of increasing employability of graduates, present great challenges to sport management programmes. Curricula need to formulate precise intended learning outcomes and create learning situations for students, which are geared to the professional demands of the sport management labour market. The question arises, as to whether current assessment methods are aligned with intended learning outcomes. In order to find answers to this question, this study examines the assessment methods currently applied in sport management programmes of German universities. In a second step, we interpret these findings in the context of competency development and curriculum design. Based on current labour market research and results of three data collections within the Erasmus+ Project “New Age of Sport Management Education in Europe”[1], we contribute to the academic research on sport management curricula in Germany by analysing employed assessment methods and drawing conclusions on student learning and competency acquisition.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

“Constructive Alignment” (Biggs, 2003) is a didactic concept to promote curriculum development and serves as our theoretical framework. Based on constructive alignment, there are three major steps of curriculum development: (1) to define intended learning outcomes (2) to define appropriate assessment tasks and criteria, and (3) to choose the teaching and learning activities that likely lead to the intended learning outcomes. Our study focuses the second step within this process. In this context, we need to make sure that the assessment tasks reflect the intended learning outcomes and competency acquisition (ibid).

Academic research on sport management curricula at institutions of higher education in Germany is scarce. Dunkel, Wohlfart and Wendeborn (2018) analysed the module descriptions of all German sport management programmes focusing on intended learning outcomes associated with the acquisition of professional competencies. On a European level the AEHESIS project gave first recommendations for the development of sport management curricula in Europe (Petry, Froberg & Madella, 2006). In contrast to the recommendations of the North American Society for Sport Management, however, these recommendations are not enforced in Europe, resulting in an abundance of different curricula.

Research Design, Methodology and Data Analysis

In a first step, the current study and examination regulations of seven German universities with sport management programmes were examined by employing a quantitative content analysis. Based on the idea of constructive alignment, we used the competence model by Kauffeld (2006) to draw conclusions, which competency acquisition would be assessed with the individual method. The acquisition of 21 competencies was ascribed to the various assessment methods. The classification of the competencies was discussed critically in the research team using the method of “critical friends” (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Thereby, it is the role of the critical friends to encourage reflexivity by challenging each other’s construction of knowledge rather than to agree or reach consensus (ibid).

Results/Findings and Discussion

We found nine different assessment methods within sport management programmes. Written exams made up one third of the assessment methods applied in the Bachelor programmes and one fourth of the assessment methods applied in the Master programmes on average. The final thesis and seminar papers appeared to be more important in the Master programmes. Oral presentations and project reports played a minor role across all programmes. Other assessment methods appeared to be hardly used. The ascribed competencies range from willingness to learn and capacity to bear loads up to capacity for dialogue and problem-solving ability. We find large differences between the number and variety of competencies ascribed to the nine assessment methods.

Conclusion, Contribution and Implication

Written exams continue to be the most prominent assessment method in sport management programmes at German universities. Based on the concept of constructive alignment we conclude that most of the intended learning outcomes would need to be associated with promoting specifically professional competencies. There seems to be a lack of intended learning outcomes associated with the acquisition of generic competencies, such as socio-communicative competencies, since oral exams or project presentations only play a minor role in assessment. The sport management labour market, however, increasingly requires specifically these competencies (Wohlfart et al., 2019). Our results imply the necessity of decision makers to include diverse assessment methods in sport management curricula. We strongly recommend the adaptation of assessment methods to meet the requirements of the sport management labour market.

[1] More information on the project is available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/3e7a9fe8-7338-4a40-8ace-bc739d467a60> (status 16.04.2019)

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