

Competence-oriented Teaching in Sport Management Higher Education in Germany

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Summary

Higher education degrees increasingly postulate practice-oriented learning situations. The integrative design of academic vocational training requires an intensive analysis of the needs and expectations of the labor market. How does this information reach the institutions of higher education and what does this mean for competence-oriented teaching in sport management programs?

Introduction and Research Questions

The central postulate in the Bologna Declaration of 29 European countries is the promotion of employability of students regardless of the disciplinary orientation of their studies and their preparation for broadly based occupational fields (Schaper, 2012). The demands placed on lecturers increases, postulating application-oriented and practice-oriented learning situations (HRK, 2013). The integrative design of academic vocational training requires an intensive analysis of the needs and expectations of the labor market (Arnold, 2015). The principal-agent theory serves as a framework for an analysis of this labor market situation. We assume that there is a metaphorical contract between the labor market (principal) and higher education (agent) (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Within the contractual relationship, the labor market assigns higher education institutions with the task to train graduates of sport management programs according to current and future needs of the labor market (Nagel, 2006). At the same time, a critical analysis is required to find out whether German academic sport management programs meet labor market needs (Dunkel, Wohlfart & Wendeborn, 2018).

This study focuses on the following key questions:

- How can the information of current and future needs of the labor market reach the institutions of higher education and in turn,
- What does this mean for competencies required and acquired from and by students of sport management programs?

Methodology

We conducted the present study in three stages. First, we analyzed and critically reflected the curricula of all German sport management programs (ibid). Next, we carried out a quantitative analysis to identify skills required by current and future sport managers in Germany in order to compare these with the skills offered by graduates of academic sport management programs in Germany (Wohlfart, Adam & Hovemann, 2018a). In a third step, we presented and critically discussed these results within the academic community in Germany (Wohlfart, Adam & Hovemann, 2018b).

Results and Discussion

The comparison of acquired skills of graduates (supply) and labor market needs (demand) indicates discrepancies that seem to be crucial for the future design of sport management programs at higher education institutions. Arnold (2015) drew attention to the need for democratic legitimization through evident proof and guidance for higher education institutions. Students need to refine their personal skills (e.g., strategic decision-making skills, teamwork, ability to work autonomously, communication skills.) as well as expertise (e.g. project management knowledge, systematical analysis of business and management problems in a situational context). References to case studies, project work and internships are mentioned in order to provoke practice and repetition of problem solving, critical reflection, and decision making. If integrated properly, these methods of teaching combine theory and practice to create dynamic, interactive learning environments with active involvement of students.

This study shows that a one-dimensional analysis of supply or demand is insufficient. Thus, multidimensional analyses of stakeholders will gain significance in an ever-changing world. In order to reduce existing information asymmetries, adequate mechanisms of cooperation between higher education institutions and the labor market are required.

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