

Team players – a project with students from different educational levels

Authors: MEd J.H.M. Tromp (1+2), MSc I.M. van der Spek (1) & PhD N.A. van Herpen (2)

Institution: The Hague University of Applied Sciences - Academy of Sports Studies: 1) Sport Management and 2) Teacher Education in Physical Education (Both Bachelor Degree Programmes).

Email: J.H.M.Tromp@hhs.nl

Aim of paper

In the Team Players project, learning becomes a dynamic process. Team Players is about 'connecting', both vertically in the educational sphere and horizontally between the school, the professional field and society. The students' different backgrounds, element of cooperation and the challenging sports-related assignments encourage efficient professional development and personal growth. Furthermore, it will stimulate students to nurture and pursue their ambitions.

Practice description

The aim of Team Players is to 'connect'. In order to make these connections, it will form an energetic team of students from different educational levels in order to learn through experience.

Collaborating programs are:

- The Hague University of Applied Sciences - Academy of Sports Studies consisting of the following two programs: Sport management and Teacher Education in Physical Education (Both Bachelor Degree Programmes).
- ROC Mondriaan "Sport & Exercise Program (Secondary Vocational Education)."

Students of The Hague University of Applied Sciences will be able to take part in the project from either their third or their fourth year depending on which education they are following. Students of ROC Mondriaan should be in their fourth year.

Students from different programs and educational levels will be participating and will all be able to benefit from a diversity of competences, ambitions, and perspectives. In order to achieve the best results, they need to combine these various strengths and work as a team. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to experiment. While working in the field, for a real client, they will have enough freedom to explore their own initiatives and ideas. This should enable the Team Players to experience a sense of ownership and assure them that they are not simply participating 'because the school has told them to'.

Context description

Team Players will provide opportunities to forge vital connections within The Hague. The assignments can be divided into the following three categories:

1. Creating accessible sport and exercise programs within a problem neighborhood, finally resulting in a structural sport culture within the neighborhood.

2. Developing opportunities for less-talented or disabled persons to develop sports skills (if possible within regular sports clubs).
3. Organizing a large scale sports and exercise-related event in The Hague.

Within these three categories, five projects were established in September 2011, namely:

- 'BSV Tenierplantsoen': An after school program to encourage children do exercise.
- 'Bouwlust': Making Bouwlust, a problem neighborhood, the most 'sportsmanlike' neighborhood in The Hague.
- 'Quick/Sophia': Introducing children with developmental coordination disorder (DCD) to a soccer club.
- 'Steinmetz de Compaan': Encouraging mentally and physically disabled to take part in exercise
- 'Haagse Schoolsport Olympiade': Organizing a sports event for about 3000 12-year children from all elementary schools in The Hague.

The project was started after an intensive 2-day introduction program with the student, the supervising teachers and commissioning clients. The Team Players (students) met every other week. Students were able to decide whether supervising teachers and commissioning clients would be present during these meetings. This is in accordance with the aforementioned sense of ownership. Additionally, the commissioning clients, supervising teachers, and the project group, which developed the Team Players concept, met to monitor progress and to learn from each other once every month. This ensures that all projects are on the right track. After three months the Team Players presented their first achievements during a symposium and it became clear that all groups had really put a lot of effort into their projects and supervision was sufficient.

In June 2012 all projects came to an end and results were again presented during a symposium. Both students and commissioning clients were proud of the work. Evaluation with students, supervising teachers and commissioning clients gave promising outcomes for the upcoming years, especially with regard to the main goals outlined in the introduction. Moreover, when students were asked about their professional development and whether personal growth had taken place all involved Team Players responded positively.

Implications and learning

As expected, most Team Players project teams felt a high sense of ownership for the projects. Although three different school backgrounds sometimes led to communication problems most students found the project very useful. This is because students acknowledge that they will be working together when leaving higher education. Students also mentioned that working for a real client had been challenging. Lessons for the supervising teachers and project group ranged from organizational issues to how to deal with students from different educational levels and backgrounds. Moreover, a big leap forward was made during 6

organized meeting in which experts in team learning gave educational advice to both teachers and clients. These lessons should make the project even more successful. These

promising results have given us the confidence to start at least 15 projects next year.