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## Graduate Experiences of Experiential Learning in Sport Management

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Synopsis:

This presentation highlights how the Massey University sport management practicum, enhances graduate employment opportunities, student learning and attributes, and ultimately benefits the sport organization.

Abstract:

For over 20 years graduates have set high standards, which have created a legacy for current students to aspire to (Martin, 2013). Many of these graduates now act as supervisors for the practicum program. The sport management program is delivered to internal distance and international students incorporating both online and blended modes of teaching and learning. The Massey University sport management practicum encourages students to be creative, innovative and 'raise the bar' set by previous graduates. The challenge is for student to add value to the organization, and further develop and enhance their personal and professional attributes. The practicum experience provides a graduate point of difference, enhancing employability and furthering students' career options in the future (Martin, Rees, Edwards, & Paku, 2012).

Theoretical Background/Literature Review

This presentation provides critical reflection of pedagogical aspects of applied experiential learning in sport management (Foster & Dollar, 2010) and highlights how these approaches have assisted graduate employability. In the sport management context the principal means for fostering integration of on- and off-campus learning is by assessment via, for example, reflective journals and assignments/reports post-placement (Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma, & Coll, 2010). Graduate feedback has indicated that to enhance employability in the sport and recreation industry, work-integrated learning programmes need to be designed so that students are provided with opportunities to facilitate the development of various competencies (Fleming, Martin, Hughes, & Zinn, 2009).

Method/Research design

This case study is based on semi-structured interviews with sport management

graduates. The descriptive responses were coded and then combined into themes. This content analysis aims to convey the holistic understanding and meaning of the phenomena under study. The credibility and dependability of the research was enhanced by triangulating the data involving relevant documentation (e.g., course/ paper outlines, graduate profiles, etc.) and literature.

Results/Discussion: The key points of pedagogy highlighted by the graduates are the value of whole course design, facilitating critical reflection, focusing on personal and professional development, and integrating theory and practice. 'Great expectations' are set by the academic supervisor, but are also reinforced by the industry supervisor who often has had previous experience of the standards required in the practicum program.

Conclusions/Implications: As a result of the sport management practicum, the student provides the organization with a skilled extra staff member with passion, innovation and creativity who can assist and challenge existing staffs' professional development.

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