

EFFECTS OF PRACTICUM COURSES ON MANAGERIAL COMPETENCES FOR SPORT EVENTS

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Introduction

In addition to lecturing and classroom discussion, empirical experience is an important way to learn sport event managerial competences. More than 30 international sport events are held in Taiwan each year since 1990. In 2004, over 50 colleges and universities in Taiwan had set up a department of sport and recreation management. Therefore, how to increase the learning effects became an important issue.

The study aimed to explore the learning effects of sport event managerial competence from a practicum course. If it does help, then, what were the approaches for learning? A survey by Peng (2002) summarized the sport events managerial competences as: self-management, interpersonal communication, applications of information technology, organizing the events, event business and marketing, designs, plans and controls, event logistics and services, security and risk management, and leadership. However, sport event staffs need to learn as they work 'on the job.' Many circumstances of sport management cannot be presented in class. Various situations always happen in sports events, and could be treated in many alternative ways. Therefore, training of sport event managerial competence has to cope with these uncertainties. The practicum course based on the concept of experiential learning was one of the ways for developing such competence. Experiential learning was a combination of formal education, work and self-enrichment of an individual. In the process of learning, positive participation helped in developing one's perception, reflection and self-assimilation (Kolb, 1986). Chu, Kao, Moh and Huang (2002) had done research on the learning effects in electronic business skills and found that practicum courses obviously enhanced the confidence and effectiveness of college students when utilizing skills related to computers and information technology.

Method

This study purposively selected 29 sophomores from the Department of Sport Management in Taiwan. They voluntarily chose 2001 Asia and World Cup Baseball events organization as their practicum. Their tasks included reception and service for VIPs, players, media center, opening and closing ceremonies, on-site interpretation. They filled out three versions of questionnaires according to their perceived managerial competences, before, during and after organizing baseball events. The data were processed by SPSS. Paired T-tests were done between pre-test and mid-test, and mid-test and post-test.

Findings

We discovered the following influences of the practicum course:

1. Learning effects:

When the quality of interpersonal relationship was good, interpersonal communication, self-management competence and confidence was attained. Confidence lead students to put greater efforts into organizing events and their own tasks. When students had opportunities to play specific roles with sufficient preparation and instruction, the effects obviously showed.

2. Approaches to learning:

Self-confidence and interactions with staff improved interpersonal communication, self-management and application of information and technique. The roles students played mainly affected events organization, marketing, service operations and safety and emergency management. Accumulated experiences developed leadership skills.

Conclusions and Suggestions

To assure its effects, practicum courses ideally should be designed and implemented in sequence from easy to complicated and hard, from guided by teachers to independent action. Students are advised choose practicum courses according to their interests, experiences and abilities. Teachers have to find

co-operative organizations that share goals similar to those of the course. To match the characteristics and individual differences of students, teachers should assign real tasks to them and explain the requirements and contents. Also, teachers need to be available for consultation for students during their practicum courses to lead their learning and encourage friendly interaction with others. Students have to make choices, adapt and prepare for the allocated tasks, do their best, and reflect afterwards to integrate the experiences into their own competences. Co-operative organizations should treat students in practicum as formal members in their organization, and not cheap labour, and help them to reach a reasonable goal.

References

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