

Personal Learning Plan – Improving Teaching Quality and Graduate Confidence in the Field of Sport Management

Anna-Katriina Salmikangas, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, salmik@sport.jyu.fi

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Abstract

At the beginning of university studies, many students feel unsure about their chosen field of study and future career (Mäkinen 2004). This situation is especially prevalent in multidisciplinary fields such as sport management. Academic training aims to develop the student's expertise and ability to transfer knowledge from one environment to another. This kind of the idea of learning is based on constructivism (Tynjälä 1999). Within the field of sport management the focus of this expertise is on understanding changes in society and sports culture. Since 1997, research has been carried out in the Department of Sport Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä in order to investigate the impact and effectiveness of various study apparatus, developed to assist students in clarifying their professional direction and reflecting on their learning processes. The present study evaluates the effectiveness of the use of the personal learning plan, which has been a core learning tool at the department since 2001. The subjects of the study were 65 students of the department, whose experiences in using the personal learning plan were recorded and analysed. The research involved action research methodology and took the form of a case study. Data sources were consisted of interviews and written reports by students. The personal learning plan includes study plans and personal essays, recording and assessing the learning of the student, while allowing for the evaluation and enhancement of the quality of teaching in the department. Overall, students found the personal learning plan to be valuable in helping them with the planning of their studies and in relieving uncertainty, which naturally increased focus and motivation. In order to be effective, the personal learning plan ought to incorporate, from the beginning, a clear description of the expected outcome of studies in terms of academic expertise.

References

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