

Introducing case studies in the multidisciplinary field of sport management

Name author: Gun Normark

Institution: Department of Sport Studies, Malmö University

Email: gun.normark@mah.se

Aim of paper

This paper will discuss three different perspectives of importance when teaching sport management today. First, sport management is a multidisciplinary field with certain opportunities and obstacles. Secondly, according to the Bologna Process students should develop academic knowledge like gathering and interpreting data, making judgments including reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues, but also train professional knowledge like decision making and problem solving. Thirdly, the recruitment of more diversified student groups emphasizes the need of non-traditional and more student active teaching methods.

Organizational context, sport studies is a relatively new academic subject in Sweden. The first undergraduate programs started at the turn of the Millennium, in most cases linked to pedagogy and physical education. Due to background of the faculty and its research a clear focus of natural science or social science can be observed in the different program syllabuses. Sport management is part of sport studies and the number of sport management students has increased steadily over the years concurrently with the growth of professionalism and commercialism within Swedish sports. Today, new and more diversified student groups attend the universities. The students are not only diverse in means of academic background, but also in age, working experience, in socio-economic status and cultural background. Malmö is a multicultural city and the university was built on the strategy of multidisciplinary programs when it was established as late as 1998. Student active learning is also part of the overall strategy, and introduction of the case method in the sport management program has therefore been discussed over the years. A pressure in increased student intake and in research funding and publications tend to form more traditional academic teachers and researchers, and new teaching methods have therefore not been given priority. The fact that Sport Studies is a relatively new academic subject makes it obvious that researchers and teachers have their background in traditional academic disciplines as; physiology, psychology, sociology, history, political science, leadership, management, economy, law and more. This is a challenge

but also a great opportunity to create new knowledge in collaboration

Educational issues

To succeed in implementing case as a method of teaching in sport management requires a broader understanding of the method and its implications and the context of sport management. First, an interpretation and understanding of the concepts of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research, and the opportunities and obstacles belonging to them, should be focused (Nissen 2006). Secondly, there is a need to discuss teaching and learning activities appropriate for the new diversified student groups (Ramsden, 1998; Biggs 2003). The case method and PBL (problem-based learning) are student active learning-methods preparing and training professional skills. The process of case learning is less controlled in certain steps than the PBL method and therefore more often used in the field of management. The case method provides different views, calls on different disciplines and integrates them solving problems, it activates previous knowledge and motivates the search of new knowledge, it stimulates the students to collaborate, it builds communication skills and requires self-directed learning (Erskins, JA et al 1998, Posch et al 2009).

Implications for sport management

Sport management students should achieve functioning knowledge, based on both declarative and procedural knowledge as well as conditional knowledge. Case studies is one way to achieve this and the method could be introduced step by step in different sport management courses. Introducing case studies in sport management requires cases written in sport context, there are some, but more need to be produced. Sport is unique and a closer collaboration between sport institutions could improve teaching and learning activities – improving learning outcomes.

References

- Biggs, John (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Erskine, James A. Leenders, Michiel R, Mauffette-Leenders, Louise A. (1998). *Teaching with cases, fourth edition*. Ivey Publishing, The University of Western Ontario.
- Nissen, Jörgen (2006). "Tvärvetenskap och/eller gränsöverskridanden?" *Utbildning & Demokrati*. 02:2006 p 81-95.
- Posch, Alfred, Scholz, Roland W. (2009). *Applying Transdisciplinary Case Studies as a Means of Organizing Sustainability Learning*. Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.
- Ramsden, Paul (1992). *Learning to teach in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.