

# COMPARING STUDENTS' PERCEIVED AND ACTUAL CRITICAL REFLECTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR IN DUTCH VOCATIONAL SPORT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION.

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## Abstract keywords

Critical reflection, individual and social learning, work integrated learning, sport management education

## Aim of abstract/paper - research question

This research aims to add to the knowledge about the value and place of critical reflection in (vocational) sport management programs. It endeavours to find an answer to the question: "how critically reflective are sport management students within the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) environment during their third and final fourth year vocational degree program?"

## Theoretical background

Although the individual learning benefits of critical reflection, especially in educational settings, have been well documented (Fook & Gardner, 2013) little is known about its use and contribution in organisational settings. This study approaches critical reflection as an interaction between individual learning (i.e., experimenting, asking for feedback, career awareness) and social learning (i.e., critical opinion-sharing, openness about mistakes, challenging groupthink) through the environment of WIL and, in turn, as a catalyst for organisational well-being (Knipfer, Kump, Wessel, & Cress, 2012). The three individual learning dimensions are aimed at self-development and personal growth. Besides learning on an individual level, sport management students in a WIL-environment, are also expected to make a contribution to the organisation's performance. These expectations are consistent with the two different environments (School Based Learning [SBL] and WIL) through which students are educated. On the one hand, the SBL environment is mainly focused on students' learning processes and on their theoretical and practical insights. WIL environments on the other hand do recognise the importance of learning but are primarily concerned about the organisational outcomes such as productivity, profit making, and customer service (Schaap, Baartman, & de Bruijn, 2012). It is therefore important for students to be aware, by reflecting critically, of this duality: learning in WIL as a student and performing in WIL as an employee (or to contribute to the organisational outcomes as a student).

## Methodology, research design and data analysis

The main objective of this quantitative study was to assess and compare the level of students' critical reflection in WIL. The web-based survey was completed by third year junior students (N=113), fourth year senior students (N=122), educators (N=25) and WIL supervisors/possible future employers (N=45). Response rates were respectively 34 %, 45 %, 50 %, and 9 %. In order to ensure the results were applicable to the Dutch situation, all 35 vocational colleges of sport and exercise in the Netherlands were contacted at the beginning of 2011. From these 35 colleges, 25 colleges offer a sport management program. A total of 20 out of 25 vocational sport management institutes participated in completing the questionnaire, adapted from previous research (Van Woerkom, Nijhof, & Nieuwenhuis, 2002). The survey consisted out of 42 items, relating to three individual and three social learning dimensions/scales of CRWB measured by using a six-point Likert scale (from 1 = disagree to 6 = agree).

## Results

Univariate analysis of variance was used to identify differences among the groups on the six variables of interest. After a reliability analysis on each of the six scales, the scale "Experimenting" (three items) within individual learning and the scales "Openness About Mistakes" (seven items) and "Challenging Group Think" (six items) within social learning were considered not reliable and discarded. For the three remaining reliable scales "Asking For Feedback" (AFF), "Career Awareness" (CA), and "Critical Opinion Sharing" (COS) each six items were collapsed and a mean was computed for each remaining scale. Three separate ANOVAs and post hoc Tukey tests were performed. The groups were identified as junior student, senior student, educator, and WIL supervisor. There was a significant difference ( $p < .013$ ) for AFF, CA, and COS between the WIL supervisors and the other three groups. The post hoc test also showed that the WIL supervisor group on these three variables was significantly different from the three other groups.

## Discussion and implications

The results show that the WIL situation is understood differently by students and educators compared to those hosting and supervising students in a WIL situation. It adds to the premise that SBL and WIL are different contexts and the education value of each must be handled in particular ways. Of main import is that the CRWB differs in these contexts. Further qualitative investigation into the underlying reasons why there is such a significant difference between the groups is recommended. Detailed knowledge of the perceived relevance and importance of CRWB will be gained for improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment of learning and critical reflection in a WIL-environment. The results from this and future study will contribute to a greater understanding of how critical reflection is University Teaching in Sports Management

perceived in sport management education programs and the potential value it may have for both education and professional practice.

### References

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