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PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF SPORTS STUDENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MANAGERIAL INTERNSHIP

Abstract. According to Vermunt (1998), teaching and learning are interdependent processes that can adjust to each other, by adapting the teaching strategies used by the teacher to the way students use and regulate their learning activities. Teaching, thus involves guiding students in the process of choosing learning strategies that allow the construction, modification and use of knowledge. Such teaching is oriented towards learning processes and implicitly towards the student because it focuses on the processes through which knowledge is built and then applied in practice. Most frequently, studies that have addressed this issue have found an increase in understanding, metacognition, and self-regulation [8,9]. Moreover, studies show that meaning-oriented learning is positively associated with the indicators of study efficiency, even in the case of scores obtained in exams containing factual questions. Reproductive-oriented learning has shown negative correlations with outcome measurement systems. Non-directed learning showed for the most part strong negative relationships with exam performance, while in most cases, application-oriented learning demonstrated a lack of a relationship with academic success. In addition, regular examinations in the first years of higher education hardly manage to capitalize on students' ability to use critical, analytical and concrete processing strategies. [4,10]

Keywords: learning, managerial practice, skills, marketing research.

The objective of the research is to determine the level of developing practical skills in master students, such as objective way of evaluating the efficiency of interdisciplinary learning activities focused on the study of marketing research, carried out through various technologies. The evaluation at the level of the second
cycle, the specialization “Marketing and legislation” within the development of the managerial practice, also provides the necessary information for the adoption, on a scientific basis, measures to establish continuity in the process of education and training of students.

**The aim of** this research is to analyze the extent to which a managerial practice program completed by masters in the field of "Marketing and legislation in sports" can contribute to learning efficiency and lead to changes in students' opinions and conceptions about learning in a constructive way.

Another objective derived from this is to verify the impact of such a program on the development and improvement of students' learning strategies and learning styles aimed at understanding and self-regulated learning. It is known that the evaluation aims at the efficiency of education and training in terms of the relationship between the designed objectives and the results obtained by students through their activities. The evaluation follows the consequences of the action taken by the teacher in the process of forming the general and specific competencies of the students [2,4]. Thus, three directions of evaluation can be expected through appropriate teaching strategies, concluding with assessments on the internal functioning of the educational-instructive action, namely: evaluation of attitudes, knowledge and skills held by students in Cycle II.

Starting from the general hypothesis through the formative experiment: the integrated design and implementation of an optional educational program within managerial practice, with emphasis on the individual activity of master students with specifics in conducting marketing research, will determine the development of practical skills, written and oral communication, attitudes of learning, by capitalizing on complex interactions within managerial practice.

The objectives monitored by us during the internship were mainly pedagogical ones focused on development:

✔ personal skills, respectively: efficiency at work, flexibility, results orientation, seriousness, appropriate behavior, desire to learn continuously, time management in order to streamline the activity at the organizational level;

✔ social skills (interpersonal communication, teamwork, problem
solving, leadership) for the development of professional activity.

Also, the economic objectives that can be achieved through the students' activities that can lead to obtaining competencies to anticipate the clients' needs by promoting a corresponding offer in tourism were monitored; their ability to develop marketing strategies tailored to specific market segments; the ability to properly manage the human resources of a sports or tourism entity.

According to the university curriculum of managerial practice within the Department of Physical Culture Management (specialized department of the State University of Physical Education and Sports responsible for organizing and conducting the internship) its objectives are concretely established as follows:

Internships of managerial practice aim achieving the following objectives:

❖ Familiarizing students with different leadership and management structures in the field of physical education and sports such as:
  - associations and sports clubs;
  - sports schools of different ranks;
  - sports federations.

❖ Consolidation and deepening of leadership and management knowledge, as well as their transformation into managerial skills and abilities.

❖ Training the ethical and leadership qualities of the manager according to contemporary requirements.

❖ Strengthen the experience of directing and organizing future managers in the current links.

❖ Consolidation of professional interest, as well as stimulation of interest for independent and creative activity.

❖ Development of managerial skills and the ability to apply the acquired knowledge in various conditions.

❖ Accelerate the process of enrolling students in the respective position and subdivision.

❖ Deepening the practical knowledge through the profile activity.

❖ The study by the internship coordinator and the leader of the capacities and aptitudes of the students in order to effectively frame them in the field of
specialization of the chosen profession.

Starting from the hypothesis of study, supplemented by the fact that a managerial practice program completed by master students from the specialty "Education, management and marketing in sports" can contribute to learning efficiency and increase the use of learning strategies focused on concrete practical activities and applying the theoretical knowledge accumulated in the course "Marketing Research" we conducted research to identify skills that can be acquired by students at the end of the internship with reference to the study discipline "Marketing Research Methodology".

From a functional point of view, the general hypothesis can be broken down into two specific hypotheses:

Specific hypothesis 1: The implementation of an educational program addressed to master students from the specialty "Education, management and marketing in sports" in managerial practice with reference to marketing research, determines the structuring of a coherent set of knowledge and skills of individual study, through active and creative involvement in learning.

Specific hypothesis 2: The use of the interactive methodology for the development of critical thinking within an interdisciplinary program focused on the acquisition of specific marketing research skills, which will also contribute to the development of oral and written communication skills of the monitored Second Cycle students.

Thus, the groups of master students, practitioners were tested the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge accumulated in the discipline "Marketing Research" in various practical, concrete activities of direct marketing research, according to a series of criteria, reflected in Table 1 and the concrete realization of some direct marketing researches reflected in Table 2. The masters carried out the marketing researches on their own, based on the requirements established by the manager of the managerial practice, based on the discussions with friends, employees of the monitored entities and their clients. The master’s students also mentioned that this would be the only way to truly understand the wishes of active sports participants or supporters / clients. Moreover, they believe that the success of communication depends on this understanding. Therefore, the observation method, although it does not allow
obtaining complex information as in the case of the survey, has the advantage of reproducing the natural, effective behavior of sports consumers, without training the information carrier. Recourse to observation involves the direct involvement of the master student, in his possible capacity as marketer or manager - practitioner, respectively their attendance of playgrounds, gyms, grandstands, ticket offices for sporting events, sports souvenir shops and all places from which information on consumers and products can be collected. Given the membership of the managers in the system and their professional training, mainly sports, this fact helps them to obtain useful information, such as, for example, personal addresses and other data that can not be obtained by observation, but by resorting to direct investigation. [1.5].

**Table 1**

**Main marketing research activities in the field of sports entity promotion carried out by master students during the managerial internship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing research activities carried out by master students</th>
<th>Share of application of research on sports entities</th>
<th>Marketing research activities in the field of product purchasing behavior</th>
<th>Share application of research on sports entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies on motivations</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Preference over the sports program</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on advertising and its effectiveness</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Satisfaction with the product</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on public image</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Purchasing behavior</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on media</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Purchasing intentions</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on the force of sale</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Segmentation studies</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

**Direct research carried out by master students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Types of research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Way of information retrieve from its bearer</td>
<td>Observation and investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of developing in time</td>
<td>Permanent and occasional research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of carrying out the research</td>
<td>Research carried out at the place of sporting events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research carried out at the sports entity office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of information to be obtained</td>
<td>Quantitative researches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative researches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The practicing master's student also resorted to market research, such as: launch a new sporting event or product; studies on the revision of the price structure in the stadium or in the sports arena; price revaluation studies for certain sports services; studies to re-evaluate the price differences between different products or between different seats in the stands.

Moreover, the most common interrogation techniques based on structured interview, used by practicing masters as a research tool was the questionnaire. The construction of the questionnaire was carried out together with the leader of the managerial practice, being decisive in achieving the purpose of the research and the established objectives. The master's student had to first establish the information needed and then include only the questions he needs answered, anticipating, as far as possible, the types of answers he expects to receive, as well as how he will use them. The structure and content of the questionnaire followed a logical scheme, starting with general questions and continuing with the specific ones and vice versa. Each question was evaluated from the point of view of its understanding by the respondent, of the probability of obtaining an answer; simple, objective questions usually receive clearer answers than questions grouped by topic.

The masters understood that the use of the questionnaire in the selective field surveys allows three types of possible applications in sports [2,6,7]:

✔ the selective field survey makes the sending of questionnaire by mail or email. This method is less expensive and may be a better way to reach a larger sample of respondents;

✔ selective field survey conducted by telephone - which has the advantage of allowing the study of consumers on market segments, directing the questionnaire to specific types of respondents, either individuals or organizations;

✔ public audit - the most commonly used method of research in sports which consists in using a questionnaire to be distributed to participants or supporters at a sporting event.

The masters also resorted to exploratory interrogation techniques in sports, materialized mainly by conducting personal interviews, research that involved organizing groups of experts (groups used in evaluating certain promotional
campaigns, forecasting sales or assessing affiliation trends with certain clubs) and specialized groups (based on a sample of supporters, a selected group of sports consumers or sports journalists) [7,8].

In Table 3 we reflect a series of applications of marketing research conducted by master students during the internship of managerial practice with reference to the communication policy of sports organizations.

Below we present the results obtained by master students at the end of the internship on research groups. The comparison was made between the control group (which did not go through the optional educational program previously established by the practice leader in terms of concrete achievements regarding marketing research) and the experiment group (which went through this program). The groups were homogeneous, consisting of 11-12 master students each. The proposed investigation, achievable in intra, inter and trans-disciplinary conditions is located at the intersection between fundamental research and applied research, normative research and operational research, philosophical research and action research, prospective and retrospective research [4].

As a special type of scientific research, pedagogical research tends towards an explanation and a normative understanding of the activity of education. It aims to define and argue the laws and principles that order the design and implementation of education at the system and process level. This perspective, located at the limit of philosophical research, highlights the need to research the purposes of education that determine the value orientations of education, achievable in different historical and social contexts.

**Table 3**

**Applications of marketing research conducted by master students in the internship of managerial practice with reference to the communication policy of sports organizations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative research on consumers</th>
<th>Qualitative research on consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 groups</td>
<td>4 groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 22-47 years</td>
<td>256 respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With affinities on certain sports</td>
<td>Age: 23-54 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried out during practice</td>
<td>Who know certain important sporting events that took place at national or international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carried out in a predetermined period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pedagogical research requires, at the same time, the concentration of efforts as on the descriptive analysis of the main factors and "actors" of education. As Gilbert de Landsheere notices, before knowing the laws of education, it is important to describe objectively the development of the training process and to analyze the procedures for its realization. Another necessary direction at the level of pedagogical research aims at the study of the historical process of evolution of thinking about education and of the specialized school institutions in its effective realization in concrete conditions that prove the "irreducible originality of the phenomenon".

Finally, the modern trends of pedagogical research highlight the importance of investigations oriented especially in the direction of university education, lifelong learning, adult education. These investigations capitalize on the issue of education theory at the level of operational models applicable in the field of lifelong learning, possible and necessary in the context of intra, inter and trans-disciplinary approaches, open to the permanent (self) improvement of the subject and object of education.

In the postmodern perspective, the pedagogical research represents an activity of managerial management of the system and of the educational process designed and realized especially for the regulation-self-regulation of the educational action, respectively of the didactic act. It allows the notification of new pedagogical relations, relevant within the educational / didactic action, constituting the basis of the optimal solutions for solving the problems that appear at the level of the system and of the educational process (Education Management).
Thus, we conducted an investigation of the levels of development of written and oral communication skills, making an implicit assessment of learning outcomes, through the observation grid of students in Cycle II, in managerial practice.

In this experiment we designed and implemented an optional educational program for students in the experimental sample. In this program we used an interactive methodology that we present below. Looking at the educational act from this perspective, we can understand marketing research, communication and communication in sports, as essential actions for the development of critical thinking. and an appropriate approach, proper to current requirements. Promoting a different learning style, the methods focused on:

- stimulating curiosity and forming an original opinion;
- problem solving;
- argumentative debate of ideas;
- democratic acceptance of everyone's ideas;
- active involvement in the learning process;
- valuing teamwork, which leads to the development of each one.

In this context, the methods subject to the attention of master students have the role of making them focus on the theoretical and practical values of knowledge and to be aware of how they can help them in their own development.

The methodology of pedagogical research involved the use of a set of techniques, procedures and means, integrated at the level of the following categories of methods aimed at scientific investigation of educational reality:

- systematic observation;
- written survey (observation grid);
- analysis of results in managerial practice;
- study of bibliographic documents accessible at academic level.
- portfolio analysis.

The method of analyzing the portfolios, the products of the subjects' activity consisted in analysis, in terms of product, but also of process, from the perspective of certain parameters established in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the research, of the data provided by the component materials of the portfolio. We
analyzed the portfolios made up of students within the managerial practice, considering the way of informing them, documenting, collecting and processing information, the way of compiling the portfolio. We also analyzed the final product and its presentation by Cycle II students.

We started the experiment in the idea of verifying the hypotheses in the development of each activity by inserting sequences aimed at marketing and communication research skills.

The control group continued its didactic activity in the usual way, using the classic teaching-learning-assessment strategies, while the experiment group had an optional educational program of work within the managerial practice, especially considering that they benefited from the study of the discipline "Marketing Research" with a new curricular content focused on practical and less theoretical one. During the advancement within the learning unit, we provided the guidance and control of learning and we practiced various forms of periodic evaluation (tests, questionnaires) and final (portfolios, tests).

The grades that we will discuss below reflect the practical knowledge of students after completing the optional educational program in managerial practice. The grades given refer to 1 - insufficient, 3 - sufficient, 5 - good, 7 - very good. Thus, for the items regarding the oral communication ability, 30% of the students from the control group obtain the insufficient grade, 24% the sufficient grade, 20% good and 26% obtain the highly grade. The students in the experiment group in a percentage of 7% obtained the insufficient grade, 12% sufficient, 44% good, and 37% the highly grade, as can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 1.

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experiment group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grades obtained for students' oral communication skills in managerial practice using the terminology specific to marketing research.
Fig. 1. Graphic reflection of the items obtained by master students in oral communication within the managerial practice

In Table 4 and Figure 2 are reflected the items regarding the written communication ability. Thus, 10% of the students in the control group obtain a good grade, 8% obtain a sufficient grade and 30% obtain highly grade, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Grades obtained for the oral communication skills of students in managerial practice using terminology specific to marketing research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Minimum</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experiment group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2. Graphic reflection of the items obtained by master students in written communication in managerial practice
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC DISCUSSION: PROBLEMS, TASKS AND PROSPECTS

In Table 5 we present the comparative values of research skills specific in marketing of the experiment group, following their evaluation by the group of experts based on the individual activities of the master students performed within the managerial practice and reflected in the practice documentation and the prepared portfolio.

**Table 5**
Comparative values of the marketing research skills of the experiment group evaluated within the managerial practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No .crt.</th>
<th>Tested values</th>
<th>Initial testing (without the optional program carried out)</th>
<th>Final testing (with the optional program carried out)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Way of processing the information</td>
<td>1.78 ± 0.17</td>
<td>2.34 ± 0.31</td>
<td>5.544</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Studies on advertising and its efficiency</td>
<td>1.69 ± 0.27</td>
<td>2.38 ± 0.24</td>
<td>5.543</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Studies on the public image</td>
<td>1.84 ± 0.29</td>
<td>2.53 ± 0.21</td>
<td>5.746</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Studies on motivation</td>
<td>2.23 ± 0.24</td>
<td>3.12 ± 0.22</td>
<td>7.723</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Studies on sports consumers</td>
<td>1.81 ± 0.25</td>
<td>2.6 ± 0.20</td>
<td>5.392</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>Studies on communication</strong> (interviews with members of the national team on a certain sporting event; interviews with sponsors; interviews with customers of sports entities)</td>
<td>1.80 ± 0.23</td>
<td>2.5 ± 0.19</td>
<td>5.384</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 5 we can see that the way of processing information at the initial test recorded a value of less than 1.78 compared to 2.34 at the final test, t being 5.544 and p less than 0.001. Also in the studies on advertising and its importance for sports entities, the master students reached the values at the initial test of 1.69 compared to 2.38 at the final one, with t equal to 5.543 and p with a value less than 0.001. Regarding the values registered in the studies on sports consumers, the master
students registered more significant values with \( p < 0.01 \), \( t = 5.392 \), and the items from the initial testing being 1.82 compared to those from the final testing of 2.6. We can also find significant values in studies on written and oral communication, where items 1.8 were recorded in the initial test, 2.5 in the final test, with a value of the student coefficient of 5.384 and a \( p < 0.01 \).

**In conclusion,** we can say that during the managerial practice students get acquainted with the experience of those working in those institutions, manage to learn the pragmatic aspects of the future profession, ways to apply theoretical knowledge to solve problems that constitute the content of activities specific to the field in which they work. Students learn to operate with the means (instruments, sports equipment, documents, registers, etc.) with the help of which the activity specific to the training field is actually carried out. Also, modern learning involves capitalizing on all sides and dimensions of the human personality. More and more attention is being paid to multiple intelligences, critical thinking and educational alternatives, without which the learning process is complete and inefficient, in the hope that the student will be prepared to learn throughout life. Today’s education must focus on participation and development of cognitive functions, fostering “the development of thinking, the faculties of acquiring and using knowledge, the creation of knowledge at all ages [...] and the development of abilities to cope with new learning situations or of life” [3,4].

**References:**