

TEACHING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT: HELPING STUDENTS TO COPE WITH COMPLEXITY BY USING THE "EXPERIENCE MAP"

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All authors:

Guido Ellert (corresp), Claas Christian Germelmann, David Wawrzinek

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Synopsis:

The Experience Map as tool for teaching sport consumer behavior is a conceptual model that draws on non-empirical research, aims at developing beneficial preconditions for decisions from a holistic perspective and presents the inner psychological system as a whole. From a didactic perspective, the Experience Map provides additional value to researchers and teachers in the context of Sports Management as well as to their students.

Abstract:

AIM OF THE PAPER

The Experience Map as a conceptual model draws on non-empirical research, aims at developing beneficial preconditions for decisions from a holistic perspective and presents the inner psychological system as a whole. From a didactic perspective, the Experience Map provides additional value to researchers and teachers in the context of Sports Management as well as to their students.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is almost a truism that we are living in an increasingly complex world. Because of the increase in complexity, many working environments have been confronted with rapid change. Turbo complexity does not stop short of teaching Sports Management at universities. This process is accompanied by the increasing relevance of findings from consumer psychology and related complex psychological processes regarding consumer experience (e.g., fan behavior or team motivation). Sports Management didactics has to rise to this challenge: This calls for new methods that help students to understand and manage these processes and the complexity. Managing such processes means arriving at well-founded decisions based on a profound understanding

of the relevant constructs and their interdependencies. Very often, Sports Management students cannot cope with these decisions because of their inadequate understanding of the system as a whole, and because of their inability to anticipate long-range and secondary effects. This is especially valid for changes in context (Dörner, 1979).

We propose to overcome these difficulties by suggesting an Experience Map as a new didactical tool for Sports Management. The map was created for students and researchers to facilitate the understanding of the inner psychological processes regarding experience. From a didactic perspective, the Experience Map provides additional value to researchers and teachers in the context of Sports Management as well as to their students: The contribution to educational development is a unique visual depiction of the experience process for researchers and students in institutions of higher education that makes both teaching and learning easier. Lines, strokes and arrows provide a visual depiction of the connections between the constructs and processes involved. Unlike many extant total models, it allows for visualizing linear as well as circular relationships between the relevant constructs. We further propose that the map increases the possibility that Sports Management researchers and students will anticipate long-range and secondary effects more accurately, and thus engage in a more competent description and management of possible Sports Management scenarios.

METHOD AND DESIGN

Based on hermeneutic methods and a thorough analysis of the extant literature, this design of the conceptual model arises from non-empirical research. Using the hermeneutic method and thinking process, it is possible to achieve an all-embracing insight into a system, when its components are known and well understood. After collecting these insights, an answer to the question of how to best depict the results visually must be provided and implemented in a didactically meaningful way. Based on additional findings, inter alia, from learning psychology (Neumann, 2013), "cognitive map-design" and "concept mapping" research (Montello, 2002; Wallace & Mintzes 1990) the Experience Map was created. It provide a networked picture of the complex inner-psychological experience process. Dörner (2012), for example, states that visuals constitute suitable aids for arriving at better decisions based on a deeper understanding of complex systems.

The visuals provided by the Experience Map provide sports managers with insights into the selection and storage of experiential stimuli connected, for instance, with sports experiences of all kinds. The map informs students about the role of consumers' motives and about past experiences for the prediction of situational behavior. First applications in teaching show that the use of the map enables students to reflect on sports consumers' experiences more thoroughly, and to come to management decisions that better take the experiential aspect of sports into account.

 

DISCUSSION

Today's students in the field of Sports Management need to acquire expertise in experience processes. The two-step development of an Experience Map that we suggest, aims at providing a navigation aid to understand the entire

complex inner-psychological experience process in a way that is scientifically and didactically well-grounded, but fits on just one (A3 format) piece of paper. Of course, the constructs included in the Experience Map are not new to the field of behavior research. However, we aim at structuring and visually depicting them for the first time as a networked process that lends itself to the use in teaching Sports Management. In doing so, we face two challenges: the need for parsimony, as well as the need for the inclusion of as many cause-and-effect-chains evidenced in the empirical literature as possible.

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