

A systematic review of out-of-school learning experience of sports professionals

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Accepted 19 May, 2020

ABSTRACT

It is not enough to be in college; the sports industry requires students undertaking different courses to gain career experience between spring break, parties, visiting and classes. Today, formal education in schools is expected to progress with practical education outside of school. This has led scholars to study different ways through which sports professionals can acquire more experience and become more effective in their work. An internship is identified as a potential way through which the professionals can gain career experience. This study reviews articles searched electronically from ProQuest, Google Scholar and the hardcopy documents from different sports journals so as to shed light on the impact of internship experience on the future career life of sports professionals. The results show that internship practice and out-of-school experiences increase the knowledge and skills of sports students. In addition, students whose knowledge and experience have increased started to be preferred by employers in their fields.

Keywords: Physical education, sport management students, sports staff, collaborative learning.

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INTRODUCTION

It is not enough to be in college; the sports industry requires students undertaking different courses to gain career experience between spring break, parties, and classes (Lu and Kuo, 2016). When looking for individuals to fill coaching, physical education, and sports management opportunities, companies look for individuals who have the capability to improve the current situation (Bullen, et al., 2015; Odio and Kerwin, 2016). Today, educational institutions offer their students a variety of out of school learning options (Özkara, 2019). Internship possibility is one of them. This process, which brings theory and practice together, is important for gaining the advantage of students in the competitive environment in the developing sports industry. The ability of individuals in the sports industry to improve the current state of the sports activities is determined on the basis of the amount of experience held. This has led to an increased concern on the significance of experience in the sports industry and ways through which the experience can be improved for increased chances of

securing jobs. As a result, a number of studies have been conducted whereby different ways of improving experience amongst internship professionals are critically evaluated and the best measures recommended. An internship is one of the ways that have been recommended by the majority of scholars in the field of sports (Zakrajsek et al., 2015).

Internships absolutely present the best alternative that sports professionals can get experience while either in college or after graduating. Current research shows that internships give sports professionals the jump start that is needed in the sports industry. There are actually many reasons as to why the internship is of great importance in the working life of a sport professional. This has resulted in scholars directing much of their efforts in addressing the different ways through which the interns can maximize their benefits from the opportunity provided (Hebert et al., 2017; Hee, 2017). Research shows that interns who are not paid something in compensation for their efforts end up not getting the jump start needed in

the sports industry. This is due to the fact that the interns remain demotivated and focus on looking for other internship opportunities (Brown and Tenison, 2018; Mooney, 2017, Özkara and Kalkavan, 2015). This has encouraged companies to pay a considerable amount of money to the interns so as to motivate them and increase their levels of satisfaction and hence put them in the best place to learn and maximize the benefit of the chance (Brown et al., 2016). Also, the poor job description has been identified as a factor behind poor benefits that interns gain from their experience (Odio et al., 2014; Brandon-Lai et al., 2016). Internships without enough knowledge of what is expected for them scratch their heads as they question their duties. They end up engaging in skill demanding activities hence bringing about failure (Milistetd et al., 2017). In the end, they do not obtain the required amount of experience. The job description should be exciting, well-defined, and clear (Stewart et al., 2016).

Other ways of improving the amount of experience amongst the sports professionals include assigning experienced employees to lead them in their activities, assigning meaningful work, nailing deadlines down, encouraging interactions, and establishing one-on-one meetings (Habib, 2018). Assigning the internships to experienced personnel helps in the process of learning. The internships freely ask questions and learn from the employees hence developing the best strategies for addressing the different problems in the field of sports. Also, treating them just the same way as the employees by nailing down deadlines acts as a source of motivation and they get to know how to utilize time in addressing different problems which are evident in the field (Super et al., 2018). Also, research shows that the interns who feel that the company values them end up performing to their greatest capacity. Valuing the interns can be best achieved by assigning them meaningful work which they can complete in time. One-on-one meetings provide the interns with the opportunity to engage in conversations with the employees from whom they learn from and gain more confidence in their work. Interactions within the company should also be encouraged (Baş et al., 2017). Research shows that interacting with the experienced employees in the sports industry provides the interns with an added value in their experience which is of great significance in their future career value (Çelik, 2019).

One of the areas that have been inadequately discussed is the significance of internship experience in the future life of the sports professionals. Studies to examine the importance of the internship experience reveal that the experience gained provides learning opportunities and competitive advantage to sports professionals. Through the internship program, the interns gain the required exposure to the basic inner workings of the sports industry. The interns end up learning the best ways through which they can best address the different problems evident in the field. There

is a common phrase in the sports industry which says that, "It is not what you know but who you know" (Hawzen et al., 2018). Employers in the sports industry hire professionals that they know the scope of their experience. During the internship program, the interns meet with different employers who easily absorb them when the internship programs end. On the issue of competitive advantage, the internship gives the sports professionals an instant leg up that helps them to secure job in the competitive industry.

The aim of this study is to systematically analyze the articles related to the internship experience [in the literature] in order to determine the effects of internship experience on the future career life of sports professionals. In this context, the problem statement of the research can be stated as follows:

"What are the effects of internship experience on the future career life of sports professionals?"

Articles published after the year 2014 will be searched from Proquest and Google Scholar with the use of the appropriate keywords and their information collected for a systematic review aimed at bringing into light the huge list of benefits of internship experience on the future life of sports professionals. Benefits agreed by the majority of the scholars in the field will be selected and presented in the conclusion section.

METHODOLOGY

This study reviewed systematically all the articles published after the year 2014 and they are related to internship experience in the sports industry. The different articles reviewed in this study were searched from Google Scholar and ProQuest and hardcopy documents. To identify the relevant resources, words searched in the two databases included sports, internships, the significance of internships, future sport professional career, and requirements of the sports industry, getting a job in the sports industry, and analysis of sports industry. The search was done on Sports Health Journal, Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Philosophy, Journal of Sports Economics, British Journal of Sports Medicine, American Journal of Sports Medicine, Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercises, and the Exercise and Sports Sciences Review Journals.

The articles identified from the hardcopy documents and electronic searches were reviewed for the selection of eligible ones. All the duplicate articles from both the hardcopy documents and electronic search were excluded. For the identification of duplicate articles, the title, date of publishing, and the authors were compared. The articles were then screened for the identification of those that did not use English Language and those that were only related to undergraduate sports science programs. All these articles were excluded. Finally, articles that did not have a full text (only had an abstract

or some parts) or did not have a clear impact were also excluded. Within the scope of this research, all articles related to the internship experience published between 2014 and 2019 were examined.

The hardcopy documents and electronic researches produced a total of 18,561 articles. Electronic search alone produced 15,673 articles. The additional records which were identified through the hardcopy documents research were 2,884 in number. Among these articles, 1,080 were duplicates. After screening the articles for the identification of those that were only related to undergraduate medical education programs and those that did not use English only, 16,597 articles were excluded. The remaining articles which would be assessed for eligibility were 884 in number. However, 872 of them did not have full text. This resulted in only 12 articles which could be subjected to the systematic review. However, four of them did not have a full impact. This resulted to only 8 articles which were subjected to the systematic review. The selection criteria are summarized by the Figure 1: Of the 8 articles selected (Milistetd et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2016; Sanford, 2017; Brown et al., 2018; Flosdorf et al., 2016; Smith, 2015; Dugan et al., 2015; Brownfield et al., 2016), 6 were journals (Milistetd et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2018; Flosdorf et al., 2016; Dugan et al., 2015; Brownfield et al., 2016) and 2 were Doctoral thesis (Sanford, 2017; Smith, 2015).

RESULTS

All the 8 articles shed light on both the importance of internship experience on the future career life of the sports professionals and the ways through which the interns can make better use of the internship programs. Five of the articles agreed on the fact that that internship experience facilitates continuous learning, increase the chances of securing job, improve the skills, and help in networking (Milistetd, et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2018; Smith, 2015; Dugan et al., 2015; Brownfield et al., 2016). Two of the articles only talked about networking, competitive advantage, and acquiring skills (Smith, 2015; Brown et al., 2018). One of the eight articles offered a comprehensive analysis of the impact of internship experience on the future life of the sports professionals (Brownfield et al., 2016). It connected the experience with increased knowledge and skills in the field of sports, networking, competitive advantage which increases the chances of an individual securing a job, continuous learning, identification of the best strategies of addressing common problems in the industry, and the selection of the best career to follow.

Of the 8 articles that were selected, each one had a different list of the ways through which the intern can maximally benefit from the internship experience. However, some articles agreed on some ways. For

example, three of the articles agreed on the fact that paying the interns motivates them and facilitates maximum learning (Sanford, 2017; Smith, 2015; Brownfield et al., 2016). Four of the articles agreed on the fact that assigning the interns to experienced employees in the field of sports puts them in the best position to learn continuously and gain confidence which is important for the professionals in the sports industry (Milistetd et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2016; Sanford, 2017; Smith, 2015). Also, four of the eight articles agreed on the fact that interactions in the sports company played a significant role in the improvement of the amount of experience gained at the end of the program (Brown et al., 2018; Dugan et al., 2015; Brownfield et al., 2016; Smith, 2015). They commonly agreed on the ideology that the interactions provide the interns with the opportunity to interact with the experienced employees in their areas of interest. They end up learning how best different problems can be addressed hence developing the best strategies for addressing problems and achieving success in the field.

DISCUSSION

It is clear from the review that sufficient research has been conducted in the effort to identify the different ways through which the effectiveness of internships programs in the field of sports can be improved. One of the detailed ways through which the programs can be improved is through the interaction of the interns with the experienced personnel in their field of specialization. Sport is based on skills (Surujlal, 2016). By interacting with these personnel, the interns get to know how they things are done. They end up connecting the class content with what is done in the field hence coming up with the best strategies for use in achieving success in the field. Another commonly agreed way of improving the effectiveness of the programs is the payment of the interns. Payment should not only be used in the motivation of the employees; the interns also have financial needs (Hee, 2017; DeLuca and Braunstein-Minkove, 2016). Paying as a way of recognizing the efforts that the interns contribute in the company can significantly help in the motivation of the interns and hence increased satisfaction. This facilitates a favorable learning environment whereby the interns freely interact as they learn new concepts and feel recognized just as the employees of the company (Sheptak and Menaker, 2016). Finally, different studies agree on the fact that assigning the interns to an experienced individual in their area of specialization puts them in the best place to learn as they freely ask questions and use the best alternatives in addressing the different problems evident in the field (Hardie et al., 2018; Nagle et al., 2018; Reddan, 2017, Özkara, 2018).

The impact or the significance of the internship

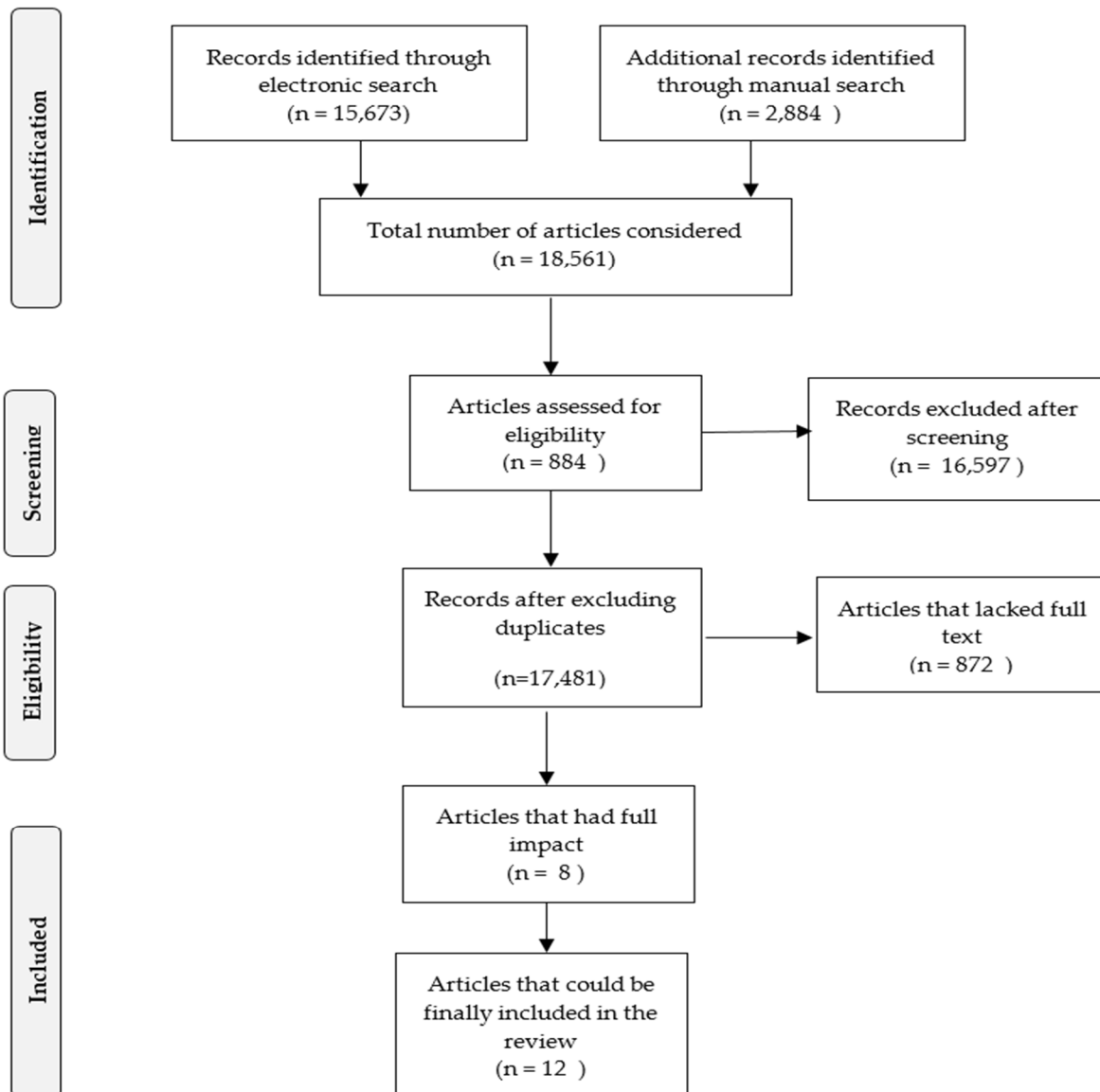


Figure 1. Screening and selection of articles for final analysis.

experience on the future career life of the sports professionals has not been thoroughly researched. The only available articles that shed light on the significance of the experience on the working life of the sports professionals specifically have agreed on only a few areas. They have agreed on the fact that internship experience increases the chances of a professional in the field of sports to secure a job. This is due to the fact that the interns get to learn the best strategies for effectively addressing the different problems evident in the field (LeRoy, 2015; Çelik, 2013). They also interact with different employers who identify their capability hence easily securing jobs with them in future. With high experience in the field, the interns learn their areas of weaknesses, improve on them, and become capable of

operating effectively in any sports company regardless of the prevailing problems (Navarro et al., 2015).

Limitations of the study

Some of the limitations of the study were the fact that articles that used different languages did not qualify to be subjected in the systematic review. Similarly, articles that did not have full texts were excluded. These articles may have contained the relevant information on the significance of internship experience in the future career life of the sports professional. Secondly, the study is not specific to the field of sports as different areas require different skills and level of experiences. This creates a

knowledge gap for further study. Further research should be carried out to determine the significance of the experience on the sports professionals in football, volleyball, or other specific areas in the field of sports.

CONCLUSION

An internship experience is of great significance in the future career life of a sport professional. This is due to the fact that the interns get to connect between the content learned in class and the field work. This is developed from the interactions between the interns and the experienced personnel in their areas of specialization whereby the interns develop the best strategies for use in addressing the different problems that are common in the sports industry. Also, the interns meet with majority of the employers in the industry during the course of the programs that assess their capability and absorb them when the program is over. The network developed as the interns serve the programs also leads to increased chances of securing jobs in the industry. In a growing sport industry, sports professionals need to pay more attention to Work-Integrated Learning.

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Citation: Malkoc, N. (2020). A systematic review of out-of-school learning experience of sports professionals. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(2): 286-291.
