

Applying A Constructivist-Developmental Practice-Based Learning Framework to the Recreation Internship Experience

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Abstract

The recreation internship is one of the most critical components of professional preparation education, yet educators have done little to explore the experience from a constructivist-developmental growth perspective. This article presents a practice-based learning framework that shows promise for fostering moral development among recreation undergraduates engaged in an internship experience. The internship is traditionally viewed as an opportunity for students to experience practical application of knowledge, skills, and competencies related to practice. While these outcomes are crucial for student professional development, the internship is also a fertile environment for student cognitive development, specifically in the moral domain. The Integrated Learning Framework (ILF) (Reiman & Oja, 2006) is an educational framework grounded in a constructivist-developmental tradition that promotes conceptual, ego, and moral development in young adult and adult learners. Applying the ILF, and its seven design principles, can facilitate the moral development of recreation interns needed for successful professional practice.

KEYWORDS: Recreation internship experience, professional preparation, moral development, Integrated Learning Framework, constructivist-developmental perspective

Introduction

As health and human service providers, recreation professionals face moral dilemmas and ethical decisions as they provide services to their consumers and clients. Practitioners make and act on many value-laden decisions in everyday practice, decisions that require them to balance complex issues and challenges. Most vulnerable to this difficult decision-making process are our most novice practitioners: student interns. Recreation interns encounter numerous moral dilemmas. They are expected to “promote the welfare of the people they serve, avoid harming their clients/consumers, maintain their professional competence, protect confidentiality and privacy, avoid exploitation or conflict of interest, and uphold the integrity of the profession” (Baird, 2002, p. 29). Interns must be prepared to provide direct services, consultation, education, research, and advocacy to diverse sets of individuals and groups including consumers, clients, patients, families, employers, policy-makers, insurance companies and third-party payers. The intern’s tasks present a variety of ethical dilemmas, generally thought of as situations where even practiced/experienced people may disagree. In confronting controversial situations, interns must be capable of negotiating the strong pull between what they think ought to be done and what they are expected to do.

Recreation service providers deal with a variety of ethical issues on a consistent basis (Jacobson & James, 2001; Jamieson & Wolter, 1999; McLean & Yoder, 2005); therefore, it would seem logical to prepare recreation students for handling the moral demands of practice. While the attainment of entry-level competencies has been the focus of recreation education in recent years, educators also have a responsibility to foster students’ moral development. Sylvester (2002) argued that educators and practitioners in the therapeutic recreation (TR) sector of the profession have asked the wrong question. Rather than focus on “What technical skills are needed to practice therapeutic recreation?” he suggested “What kind of person should I be to practice therapeutic recreation?” (p. 330). He argued that means other than the national TR certification exam could be used to measure the moral compass of potential TR practitioners. These alternative means include an examination of “internships and other field-based experiences” (Sylvester, p. 330). Sylvester’s call to develop and assess ethical decision-making holds for all sectors of the recreation profession.

Literature exploring the presence of ethics education within recreation education (Ellis, 1993; Henderson & Bedini, 1989; Nisbett, Brown-Welty, & O’Keefe, 2002; McLean & Yoder, 2005; Nisbett & Hinton, 2008; Shank, 1996; Sylvester, 2002) typically examines the value of ethics education and/or the processes and methods by which students obtain ethics knowledge and competencies. It shows that most curricula include some coverage of the ethical issues related to practice. It also articulates the need for students to demonstrate ethical behavior as they venture out into the field. Those curricula that are accredited through the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) (2011) are required to offer instruction in professional ethics as evidenced by standard 7.01.03 related to decision making, and standard 7.03.02 related to management procedures. The extent and focus of this instruction can differ greatly from one program to another (Nisbett, Brown-Welty, & O’Keefe, 2002; Nisbett

& Hinton, 2008). Ethics education for successful recreation professional practice has traditionally been accomplished through formal ethics training in the classroom, but less so through exposure to real-life moral situations during fieldwork experiences (Anderson, Schleien, & Green, 1993; Henderson & Bedini, 1989).

Like Mead (1934), and other constructivist theorists, the authors contend that the stimulus for moral competency of recreation interns is more likely to occur during fieldwork experiences where the student assumes a real-world helping role, rather than through ethics discussions or role-playing in the classroom. This is not to suggest that an understanding of professional ethics through classroom instruction is not important, because foundational knowledge must be acquired; rather, the field could benefit from an exploration of other pedagogical means to support the ethical development of our students. The professional internship experience offers an ideal opportunity to practice ethical decision making as students grapple with moral issues when they assume the role of a pre-professional.

There is no doubt that an understanding of ethics is crucial to student professional development; however, recreation educators need to be more attuned to the study of how students actually handle the moral demands of practice and how they perform as “moral agents” (Triezenberg & Davis, 2000, p. 48). Promoting the moral behavior of interns is a logical aim of ethics education, and the formal internship experience is an ideal mechanism through which this development can occur. This said, recreation educators have yet to explore internships from a constructivist-developmental growth perspective. This perspective suggests that students do not find or discover knowledge so much as *construct* or *make it* (Schwandt, 2001, italics added), and it is through this active construction that cognitive development across various developmental domains (e.g., ego, conceptual/reflective, moral/ethical) can occur. Internship literature has detailed a variety of issues germane to the study of developing and implementing effective programs (Beggs, Ross, & Knapp, 2006; Beggs, Ross, & Goodwin, 2008; Coco-Ripp, 2005; Grabel & Lee, 2005; Holmes-Layman & Pommier, 2001; Hurd & Shclatter, 2007; Kelley, 2004; Skalko, Lee, & Goldenberg, 1998; Stumbo, Carter, & Kim, 2003; Stratta, 2004; Williams, 2004; Zabriskie & Ferguson, 2004); however, none of these sources offer insight into the role of the internship in moral development. According to Beggs et al. (2006), many studies in recreation education “fall into the category of ‘think or essay pieces’ on the value of internships, how to structure internship programs, and evaluations of the internship experience” (p. 2). While it is important to examine the experience from a descriptive perspective, it is also beneficial for educators to study student developmental outcomes. Other professions such as teacher education (Johnson, 2008; Reiman & Johnson, 2003; Reiman & Parramore, 1993; Reiman & Peace, 2002; Watson, 1995) counseling (Cannon, 2008; Brendel, Kolbert, & Foster, 2002), dentistry (Bebeau, 1985), nursing (Kritchbaum, Rowan, Duckett, Ryden, & Savik, 1994), medicine (Self & Baldwin, 1994; Sheehan, Husted, Candee, Cook, & Borgen, 1980), physical therapy (Sisola, 2000), accounting (Ponemon & Gabhart, 1994; Porco, 2003), and pharmacy (Latif & Berger, 1999), have shown a commitment to examining the moral developmental gains associated with the professional preparation of their students, yet recreation educators have not viewed the internship experience in this way. Thus, examining field experience from a developmental

perspective would be a new approach for recreation education that would complement the COAPRT's (2011) call for the documentation of student learning outcomes.

The purpose of this article is to present the Integrated Learning Framework (ILF) (Reiman & Oja, 2006), a theoretical practice-based framework linked to cognitive developmental gains among young adults and adults, and discuss how the ILF is incorporated into a recreation internship experience to provide a potential curriculum and pedagogy guide for the internship requirement. The seven design principles of the ILF are discussed in relation to one internship program from a COAPRT accredited recreation curriculum at a mid-sized public university in the northeast region of the country.

The Integrated Learning Framework

The Integrated Learning Framework (ILF) (Reiman & Oja, 2006) is a practice-based theoretical framework grounded in a constructivist-developmental tradition that can guide curriculum and pedagogy within a professional education program. The ILF builds upon elements of the Teaching Learning Framework (Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983), a practice-based applied orientation to learning and development in teacher education. Reiman and Oja consolidated the framework to seven conditions (principles), which are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Seven Design Principles of the Integrated Learning Framework
(Reiman & Oja, 2006, pp. 133-135)

Design Principle	Description
Contextualized Learning & Development	Initially, professional educators must contextualize learning and instruction by accounting for prior knowledge and experiences of diverse learners. This condition also requires professional educators to be attuned to the present intellectual reasoning of learners.
Complex New Helping Experiences	Placing persons in complex new helping roles requires them to enlarge their understandings beyond what is currently comfortable. When persons engage in complex & significant new roles the experience with practice (action) precedes and shapes the intellectual consciousness that grow out of it. Inquiry (analysis & reflection) best grows out of practice-based problems present in one's immediate experience in the new role. Thus, learning to use new knowledge & strategies to improve one's practice is key.

Table 1 (cont.)

Guided Inquiry	<p>Encouraging careful & continuous guided reflections during the new role-taking experience are important because unexamined experience forfeits the potential for growth. To insure that reflection occurs, careful feedback can be given to aid the person as he/she makes meaning of the new experience. Guided inquiry includes both learner self-assessment & guided reflection. Carefully planned activities that encourage self-assessment of performance, and ongoing discussions and journaling are needed. These activities are guided by a “more capable other.” One cannot assume a sophisticated capacity for reflection by students. Thus, the guided inquiry process differentiates written inquiry according to individual’s current preferred ways of conceptualizing and reflecting on ill-structured problems and ethical dilemmas. Individuals that are less reflective are provided higher structure, more encouragement, more links to concrete experience, and more conceptual scaffolds in the written discussion. Conversely, persons demonstrating higher levels of conceptual and ethical complexity in ongoing written analyses are provided with less structure and more frequent consideration of theoretical and ethical issues related to practice.</p>
Balance Between Experience and Inquiry	<p>Balancing experience and inquiry/reflection discourages over-reliance on the experience or the self-analysis. Usually this means that the practice-based experience is sequenced with guided inquiry each week. Too great a time lag between action and reflection or too little time appears to halt the growth process.</p>
Support and Challenge	<p>Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978) helps describe the support and challenge condition. Support (encouragement) and challenge (promoting the learner to accommodate to new learning) are necessary for learning and development. This is the most complex pedagogical requirement of the ILF approach. Novice professionals in the midst of a complex new experience confront new responsibilities and new professional challenges and are often in the middle of “knowledge perturbation.” Acknowledging and reinforcing an intern’s current meaning making system is referred to as matching (support). Alternatively, when interns demonstrate a readiness for more conceptual & ethical complexity, a mismatch (challenge) is provided via the inquiry process.</p>

Table 1 (cont.)

Continuity	There is a learning truism that spaced practice is vastly superior to massed practice (Sprinthall, Sprinthall, & Oja, 1998, p. 295). The complex goal of fostering change in interns' performance as well as ethical judgment and conceptual judgment requires a continuous interplay between experience and inquiry....Typically, at least four to six months are needed for significant learning and development to occur.
Reflective Coaching	Attention to new abilities (performances) requires an instructional model of coaching, wherein the adult learner, over time, acquires "executive control" of complex new performances. The reflective coaching process supports the intern as she/he attempts new skills that are situated in practice. Joyce and Showers (1995) maintain that support through coaching to enhance one's instructional repertoire requires the following: ascertaining prior knowledge, clarifying the supporting rationale and evidence for performance, introducing demonstrations of the performance, providing opportunities for practice with self-assessment, and integrating observation and feedback by a more capable other for assessment of learning performance.

According to Reiman and Oja, the overall goals of the ILF include (a) the development of more complex and integrated understanding of oneself (ego development), (b) the formation of greater conceptual/reflective judgment complexity and flexibility as one interprets and acts in practice (conceptual complexity), (c) the growth of more complex moral/ethical judgment reasoning in response to ethical dilemmas (moral development), and (d) the acquisition of new behavior performances that enhance one's professional practice. Intervention studies using the ILF often use formal outcome measures to assess cognitive-developmental change in the conceptual/reflective, self/ego, and moral/ethical domains (Oja & Reiman, 2007). The domains are considered overlapping, partially interdependent measures of cognitive development. Each domain is an indicator of how a person derives meaning from experience according to his/her developmental capabilities. For example, the research base in the moral domain from Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999) support a view of the professional as a principled and caring decision maker. In the teaching profession, higher stages of moral judgment have been related to teachers' competencies in viewing their teaching roles as more democratic, maintaining more positive relations with students, understanding better their students' needs and feelings, viewing curriculum from a broader social perspective, teaching with individual students' interests in mind, helping students to understand the reasons for rules, tolerating diverse viewpoints and encouraging students to take multiple perspectives (Chang, 1994;

Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; Johnson & Reiman, 2007; O’Keefe & Johnston, 1989; Oser, 1992; Reiman & Peace, 2002). A meta-analysis of quasi-experimental studies that used the ILF was reported in Reiman and Oja (2006). Eleven studies included ethical judgment as a dependent variable. The number of educators per study was relatively small (range = 12 to 68), yet the average effect size across the 11 studies was $+ .65$, which is a moderately large effect size using the Cohen power analysis (Reiman & Oja). This effect suggests that the ILF led to significant positive changes in teachers’ ethical judgment. While these studies came from the field of teacher education, the authors contend that the ILF shows great promise as a curriculum guide for fieldwork requirements in the recreation education profession.

Theoretical Assumptions of a Constructivist-Developmental Perspective

Constructivism is a theory about how humans learn. Most constructivists agree that learning is not passive, but rather is an active process where the mind “does something” with impressions or sense data that is coming in—at a minimum, the mind forms abstractions (or concepts) with this data (Schwandt, 2001). While the ILF grew out of the cognitive-developmental tradition of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969), and was influenced by the socio-cultural perspective of Vygotsky (1978), it is more aligned with the constructivist-developmental perspectives of Fischer and Pruyne (2002), King and Kitchener (2004), and the social-cognitive perspectives of Mentkowski and Associates (2000) and Rest et al. (1999). According to Oja and Reiman (2007),

These theoretical approaches share (a) an underlying assumption that meaning is constructed, (b) the emphasis on understanding how individuals make meaning from their experience, (c) the assumption that development and learning occur as people interact with their environments, and (d) the assumption that construction and reconstruction of meaning occurs through assimilation and accommodation and affective dissonance. These theories also share the view that persons’ meaning making is described in developmental terms. The organizing principles, reasons, and affect people use in interpreting their experiences are described as becoming more complex, integrated, and principled over time. Such development does not occur automatically. Rather, growth depends on interactions within social environments that both support and challenge growth (p. 93).

The ILF’s primary principles for promoting cognitive growth include role taking, reflection, and social interaction, which were critical elements of the work of three practical theorists: George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky (Oja & Reiman, 1998). For Mead (1934), social experience and social role taking were necessary bridges or conditions for cognitive development. He established the importance of role taking as a mechanism for human growth. He claimed that development resulted from “active participation in a complex, ‘real-world’ activity as opposed to simulated experience such as role playing” (Oja & Reiman, p. 473). Mead’s concept of role taking influenced a number of studies by Sprinthall and Theis-Sprinthall (1983), who began studying its application in secondary schools. They observed that helping skills being learned and applied in

real-world settings offered great promise in fostering ethical and conceptual judgment in beginning teachers. The Teaching and Learning Framework, and subsequently the ILF, originated from these early studies. Mead's concept of role taking is seen in the "complex new helping experience" principle of the ILF.

Dewey (1938) emphasized the critical interplay between action and reflection. He recognized that the content of experience differed quite significantly for each individual; therefore, education and supervision were needed to address the fundamental tasks and performances in teaching as well as the many forms of dialogue between the participants in supervision (Oja & Reiman, 1998). According to Dewey, these forms of dialogue could be written and oral. Dewey also advocated that the "coach" recognize when to "stretch the student's functioning slightly beyond his/her current preferred style of problem solving" (Oja & Reiman, p. 473). Dewey's influence on the ILF is most readily seen in the "guided inquiry" principle. Dewey recognized that for experience to be educative, it must be guided by reflection.

Vygotsky's (1978) influence in the ILF is seen in the area of social interaction. Vygotsky encouraged shared meaning through sustained interactive discourse. Participation in shared problem solving with others presents the learner with a variety of perspectives, thus encouraging the learner to develop a number of frameworks for thinking. According to Oja and Reiman (1998), "The key to Vygotsky's account of development is his postulation of the zone of proximal development, which is typically described as any person's range of potential for learning and development where the development is framed by the social environment in which it takes place" (p. 473). In Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, the social construction of meaning occurs simultaneously in several domains. According to Vygotsky, the learner can perform at a developmentally more advanced level when assistance and guidance is provided by more experienced others than when acting alone. This difference in level of development suggests that the learner has a range of potential rather than a fixed state of ability. Vygotsky's influence in the ILF is seen in the "support and challenge" principle.

The theoretical influence of Mead, Dewey, and Vygotsky on the ILF is quite significant. The major theoretical assumptions of the ILF are that growth is driven by role taking in real-world activity, sustained interactive discourse that encourages shared meaning, and on-going reflection (Reiman & Oja, 2006). Consistent with Piaget's equilibration theory, the impetus for new cognitive learning in the ILF begins with knowledge disturbance or disequilibrium. Exposure to situations posing problems and contradictions for the current cognitive schema is a major focus of the ILF. The increased responsibility and subsequent challenge of social role taking experiences have the potential to create disequilibrium. As individuals grapple with new information and attempt to make meaning through interactive discourse with others, they begin the process of self-regulation.

Carefully designed recreation internship experiences modeled on the ILF attend to the moral development and professional preparation of recreation students. Moral development does not occur automatically; rather, it depends on interaction within a social environment that both supports and challenges this growth (Oja & Reiman, 2007). With carefully guided and graduated experiences in a real-world helping role, with guided reflection, instruction for both support and challenge, and balance between the

experience and reflection, recreation interns may move to more complex levels of moral development.

Application of the ILF to the Recreation Internship

A description of a recreation internship program is provided to help the educator better understand the ILF as a potential curriculum and pedagogy guide. In this section, the authors discuss how the components of one specific recreation internship program incorporate the seven design principles of the ILF.

Principle 1: Contextualized Learning and Development

This ILF principle suggests that educators need to contextualize learning and instruction by accounting for students' prior knowledge and experiences (Reiman & Oja, 2006). This is accomplished in the internship program through a professional development pre-internship course and agency approval process.

Professional development pre-internship course. The two-credit pre-internship course, taught by the department's Internship Coordinator, carefully guides and matches interns with their internship sites. During the pre-internship course each prospective intern must (a) complete a set of self-assessment exercises identifying professional experiences, career preferences, and work/personal strengths and weaknesses; (b) create a professional cover letter and resume; (c) practice interviewing skills; and (d) put together a professional development portfolio reflecting these assignments. These four assignments provide the Internship Coordinator with a wealth of information about where the students are in their career and personal development and enables the Internship Coordinator to make informed suggestions about potential internship sites tailored to students' needs, strengths, and preferences. While the internship search is completed under the guidance of the Internship Coordinator, the student is responsible for identifying potential sites by either using the department's pre-approved database or locating a site that has not been used by the department in the past. During the guidance process, the Internship Coordinator ensures that all potential internship sites are tailored to the intern's needs and meet specific departmental criteria that facilitate the intern's ability to address the competencies for internship.

Agency approval process. The three essential components in the agency approval process are the student, agency, and the university department. The student is expected to commit to the internship search process by utilizing all departmental resources and completing all required paperwork. In order to be eligible for internship, the student must complete pre-requisite coursework, pass the two-credit pre-internship course with a grade of C or better, and obtain an internship position at an approved site. The agency must be willing and committed to the student. Summarized, some of the agency responsibilities include: (a) providing professional guidance and direction by a competent practitioner with at least two years of experience in current position, (b) leading the student progressively into assuming increasing responsibilities, (c) assisting the student in achieving his/her stated goals and objectives and those of the university, (d) providing the student with written guidelines and expectations of job duties, and (e) providing the student with written and/or verbal feedback of an evaluative nature.

One of the main functions of the academic department is to provide a road map that establishes guidelines for the fieldwork experience. The academic department has three general roles: (a) administrator of the program, (b) mediator for the student and agency, and (c) final evaluator of the student's performance. The academic department's primary responsibility includes assisting in the professional and personal development of the student by providing regular and on-going supervision and mentoring throughout the internship experience.

Through this highly individualized matching and site approval process, the university internship coordinator, internship site supervisor, and student intern develop a clear and mutually agreed upon plan for intern development that is continued throughout the 14- to 16-week internship experience. This component of the internship program is highly consistent with the contextualized learning and development principle of the ILF.

Principle 2: Complex New Helping Experience

According to Reiman and Oja (2006), helping skills being learned and applied in real-world settings offer great promise in fostering moral growth among students. Helping others and taking the perspective of others is a complex and powerful activity that can promote learning and development across a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal domains (Reiman, 1999).

The internship. This experience meets this principle as the department requires the intern to engage in a complex new helping role for 14-16 weeks in the health and human service arena. At no other time during the student's curriculum is he/she required to engage in such a time and labor-intensive field experience. During the internship, the intern provides recreation or therapeutic recreation services directly to real consumers, clients, and/or patients. This new role is very different from the students' classroom experiences. In addition to the pressure associated with assuming a role that has real-life consequences for those served, the nature of the work requires the intern to confront unfamiliar or confusing practice-based problems on a daily basis. These problems can be moral in nature and may require the intern to use new knowledge and strategies to make moral decisions that will subsequently impact performance.

Principle 3: Guided Inquiry

Careful and continuous guided reflection during the new helping experience is critical for moral growth (Reiman & Oja, 2006). Because students may not be sophisticated in their reflection, they must be guided by a "more capable other" (Reiman & Oja, p. 134) such as an academic supervisor and/or site supervisor. Academic assignments serve as the mechanism through which the guided inquiry occurs.

Academic assignments. The internship program builds in regularly scheduled assignments that encourage intern self-assessment of performance and learning. These assignments are uploaded by the intern into an online repository of intern work using a course management system (e.g., Blackboard®), which the academic supervisor reviews on a weekly basis. These assignments include: (a) weekly time reports indicating job tasks completed during the work week, (b) two formative papers and one summative paper that require the intern to reflect on competencies gained, personal and professional growth, and areas of improvement that still need to be achieved, (c) bi-weekly online discussion

responses to guided questions that additionally provide a forum for peer interaction with the total intern cohort across diverse internship sites, (d) a written special project report that summarizes the outcomes of the intern's unique and comprehensive extra project, (e) a written mid-term and final evaluation from the site supervisor using evaluation forms provided by the academic department, and (f) a summative internship portfolio document containing all academic work completed during the internship. At the conclusion of the internship experience, the intern submits the summative internship portfolio and meets with the academic supervisor for a face-to-face or telephone exit interview. During this final meeting, the intern is asked to articulate his/her professional and personal growth areas and the academic supervisor follows-up on issues that may have been problematic for the intern during the experience.

Through these academic assignments, the intern often seeks out expert advice or materials to help pursue solutions to very real and potentially intense organizational problems or issues. In turn, the academic supervisor provides careful written and/or verbal feedback in order to help the intern learn from the experience. The intern can then systematically "try out" and modify the suggestions of the academic supervisor and complete the cyclical action-reflection-action process.

Principle 4: Balance Between Experience and Inquiry

This design principle indicates that an appropriate balance between practice and self-analysis must be maintained so that there is not an over-reliance on one or the other (Reiman & Oja, 2006). This principle is achieved by the intentional staggering of academic assignments throughout the 14- to 16-week internship experience.

Ongoing reflective assignments. The reflective assignments in the internship program are intentionally staggered throughout the 14- to 16-week experience so that there is little time lag between intern action and reflection. These assignments provide a mechanism for timely reflection and ensure that the intern is in regular contact with the academic supervisor who is then in a position to provide guided support and inquiry. These assignments afford the student multiple venues to reflect on his/her experience while in the midst of practice. Although the academic supervisor has primary responsibility for giving the student feedback, other students on internship have the opportunity to post and comment on their peers' reflections through the course management discussion board. This component is consistent with the ILF design principle.

Principle 5: Support and Challenge

Novice professionals who are in the midst of complex new experiences regularly confront new responsibilities and new professional challenges. One of the most important elements of the ILF is the support and challenge principle (Reiman & Oja, 2006). Support (encouragement) and challenge (promoting the learner to accommodate new learning) are both necessary for growth. This principle aligns with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and suggests that interns can perform at a developmentally more advanced level when assistance and guidance is provided by more experienced others than when acting alone. "Acknowledging and reinforcing an intern's current meaning-making system is referred to as match (support). Alternatively, when interns demonstrate a readiness for more ethical complexity, a mismatch (challenge) is provided via the inquiry

process” (Reiman & Oja, 2006, p. 134). As interns encounter ethical conflict in their new professional role, they experience disequilibrium as the new information challenges their usual mode of thinking. With significant support of the mentor who guides and challenges them to further inquiry, interns can begin to interpret and understand the new experience, and develop alternative ways of thinking about these dilemmas; their ways of thinking may shift from concrete to abstract, simple to complex, and self-centered to other-centered. As a result their ethical reasoning may become more integrated and principled over time enabling them to better define, handle, and resolve ethical problems and work cooperatively with others as they construct a professional ethical identity (Oja & Craig, in press).

Academic and on-site supervision. In the internship program modeled on the ILF, both the academic supervisor and the internship site supervisor provide differentiated support and challenge to help the intern accommodate the new experiences. During this process, supervisors frame instruction to the intern’s present level of understanding. Hunt (1976) first referred to this process as ‘reading and flexing’ to students. This requires a clear, open line of communication between both supervisors so they can avoid contradicting each other during this process. This component is one of the strengths of the example internship program. Both academic and site supervisors work in concert to support the personal and professional development of the intern. This teamwork is evident from the beginning during the site approval process and is reflected in the on-going email and phone communication between academic and site supervisors, culminating with the mid-term site visit.

Mid-term site visit. The academic supervisor conducts a mid-term site visit to evaluate the progress of the internship experience to date, confirm topics for the special project, review progress toward other university requirements, and advocate for changes in the overall experience (as warranted). The academic supervisor meets with the intern, his/her site supervisor, and occasionally co-workers to address the intern’s performance and propose a plan for the remainder of the internship. The department commits to face-to-face site visits for over 95% of interns, regardless of where the intern is working in the country. For those interns who do not receive a face-to-face visit due to constraints associated with getting to a location, a teleconference or videoconference is scheduled instead. The site visit constitutes a tremendous labor and financial commitment by the department; however, interns remark positively about the value of this visit in their overall experience. Interns view the academic advisor as a familiar face who lessens the anxiety associated with being away from home; interns are proud to show off their newfound knowledge and skills to the academic supervisor; interns benefit from the problem-solving assistance provided by the academic supervisor who serves as that objective third party observer; and interns appreciate the academic supervisor’s advocacy efforts in situations that require changes to the current system.

Evaluation process. In order to more effectively provide guidance and encouragement to the intern during the experience, the department requests the site supervisor to conduct a written assessment of intern performance at the midterm and final points of the internship. The evaluation forms are provided by the department and reflect entry-level competencies for practice identified by NCTRC for therapeutic recreation interns and NRPA (CPRP exam) for program administration interns. Going

forward, this evaluation form will include student learning outcomes as required by the COAPRT standards (2011).

Intern cohort connection via the course management mechanism. Another component of the example internship program that may contribute to the support and challenge principle is a peer support community created by online asynchronous discussions. Because interns are scattered across the United States at diverse internship sites, the discussion forum serves as a home base because it provides a source of connection for all interns in a cohort during a given semester or summer session. Interns are encouraged to interact and offer support and advice to each other throughout the 14- to 16-week internship. Interns often share ideas for special projects and provide advice for ways to deal with conflicts in the workplace. At times, the academic supervisor might intentionally pair up interns who are experiencing similar concerns and request that they communicate with each other using the online forum as they work through their issues. Participation in shared problem solving with others presents the learner with a variety of perspectives (Reiman & Oja, 2006). Interns often remark that the discussion forum helps them realize that they are not alone, and they are not the only one experiencing similar problems. The discussion forum has served to minimize some of the isolation that interns experience particularly during the initial weeks in a new environment. For many recreation interns, this is their first experience without the familiar supports of family and friends as many venture off to new geographic locations for the first time. In an effort to balance the support and challenge of the new experience, students are appreciative of the online networking opportunity to hear and respond to one another. Interns often acknowledge that the community of support fostered by this forum was critical to their success in the experience.

Principle 6: Continuity

According to Reiman and Oja (2006), the goal of fostering change in interns' performance and ethical judgment requires a continuous interplay between experience and action that lasts at least four to six months. Because the example internship program requires an internship experience lasting only three and a half months, this design principle is not fully met. This is one feature of the internship program that is inconsistent with the ILF, however the 14- to 16-week time requirement is consistent with, and in some cases beyond, the average timeframe of internships in the recreation profession as reflected in the fieldwork standards of COAPRT (2011) and NCTRC (2008). The current 14- to 16-week requirement is currently under study to determine if the timeframe for the internship needs to be lengthened.

Principle 7: Reflective Coaching

The reflective coaching process supports the student as she/he attempts new skills that are situated in practice (Reiman & Oja, 2006). A critical element of this development includes instructional support of a "more capable other" (p. 134). Reiman and Oja call this mentoring process "reflective coaching" (p. 135) and suggest that the supervisor who is successful in this process supports the intern as she/he attempts new skills that are situated in practice.

Internship supervision. In the case of the example internship program, the most compelling mentor and the person most critical in the reflective coaching process is the internship site supervisor, because he/she interacts with the intern on a daily basis and is expected to provide formal feedback at least once a week. The site supervisor's experience level and ability to mentor the intern into the profession is of utmost importance. A supervisor who provides reflective coaching demonstrates the ability to ascertain the intern's prior knowledge, clarify the rationale and evidence for intern performance, provide opportunities for practice with self-assessment, and integrate observation and feedback for assessment of the intern's performance (Reiman & Oja, 2006). Throughout the 14- to 16-week experience, the site supervisor's reflective coaching and mentoring helps the intern adapt to the new environment of practice.

While the internship program does not guarantee the pairing of an intern with a site supervisor who is proficient in reflective coaching, the department's site approval criteria for an appropriate site supervisor attempts to weed out those supervisors who may be limited in their ability to mentor the intern in the manner expected. A minimum of two years of experience in the current position is required for all on-site supervisors. The university internship coordinator speaks with all potential site supervisors during the approval process and conveys the importance and department expectations of the site supervisor in an effort to convey the critical role the on-site supervisor plays as a mentor. The academic supervisor also meets with the site supervisor during on-site visits to reinforce the importance of this role and to acknowledge and thank the practitioner for their contribution to the development of new professionals. Although efforts are made to encourage reflective coaching, because no formal training in reflective coaching is provided to the site supervisor, this design principle is not fully met.

Discussion

The recreation internship program discussed in this article encompasses most of the design principles of the ILF. By carefully selecting a more complex helping role with guided inquiry, the intern has the potential to grow towards more complex levels of moral development (Reiman & Oja, 2006). As the intern encounters unfamiliar ethical dilemmas in daily practice that might appear threatening to personal security, he/she may feel uncomfortable or off balance. In order to make sense of these unfamiliar ethically challenging experiences, the intern is guided by more experienced others, namely the academic and site supervisors. The intern, academic and site supervisors work together to process these issues and strategically plan to help the intern adapt to and flourish during these new experiences. Creating a cohesive internship program framed by a constructivist-developmental perspective enables the faculty to craft an academic experience for the student that is worthy of the academic resources required to support it. The pre-internship course, the commitment and financial resources devoted to academic supervisors, the site visits and relationship networks established with on-site supervisors, the travel expenses, the internship coordination and the course development of the course management site are all integral components that support the Integrated Learning Framework of the internship program. Applying the ILF to conceptualize the internship

program has created a more logical and consistent professional fieldwork experience. The central principles of the ILF reaffirm the importance of committed internship supervisors. Committed, active academic faculty members are crucial sources of support for interns' cognitive development. For the internship program discussed in this article, active academic supervision means regular reading and skillful responses to weekly academic assignments, including the bi-weekly discussion posts, talking with the site supervisor within the first two weeks of the internship to make sure the intern has settled into his/her position, keeping abreast of on-going issues and concerns and keeping an open line of communication with the intern and the site supervisor, and conducting an on-site meeting with the site supervisor and other staff to discuss the intern's performance and problem-solve strategies to enhance the intern's effectiveness and subsequent experiences. These actions convey to the intern and the site supervisor that the academic supervisor is actively engaged in the learning experience for the intern, and they enhance the faculty member's ability to meet the support and challenge, and reflective coaching principles of the ILF.

As the recreation professions address new accreditation guidelines that have a primary focus on student competency, it is important to consider alternative sources of competency, such as cognitive developmental outcomes for students who are engaged in fieldwork experiences. Educators should recognize that the internship experience can be more than just a strategy for students to attain entry-level practice competencies, but can also move students toward more complex levels of ethical reasoning (Boss, 1998; Cannon, 2008; Porco, 2003; Reiman & Parramore, 2002; Reiman & Peace, 1993; Watson, 1995). Educators would agree that a quality internship curriculum consists of more than just sending students out into the field and expecting the internship site to shoulder the burden of student development. The university needs to be more actively involved during the internship in order to heighten students' awareness that ethical dilemmas will emerge during the internship, provide support for reflection, and provide support to the internship site supervisor. These are all central components of the ILF, a promising practice-based framework for the professional preparation of recreation students. Used in the right way, the ILF can guide curriculum within professional recreation preparation programs.

Recommendations

Adoption of the ILF as a guide for the recreation internship requirement warrants further examination. For example, the field may benefit from a study examining whether the current recreation fieldwork standards as proposed by the COAPRT (10 weeks) and NCTRC (14 weeks) are of an adequate duration to foster significant student ethical development. As noted by Reiman and Oja (2006), in order for significant learning and development to occur, the intern should be immersed in the fieldwork experience for "at least four to six months" (p. 135). As currently structured by the COAPRT and NCTRC, the recreation internship experience does not meet this suggested four- to six-month timeframe.

Because the support and challenge and reflective coaching principles are central to the ILF, it would be important to know what factors may enable the academic and site supervisors to more effectively mentor the intern so that cognitive development may occur. A valuable study might examine the background, traits, and characteristics of the academic and site supervisors. For example, does age or educational background matter, or is it important that the supervisors have conducted an internship themselves prior to mentoring an intern. Another fruitful study of academic and site supervisors may include an examination of outcomes associated with training in the support and challenge and reflective coaching principles of the ILF. Similarly, in order to more fully address the guided inquiry principle of the ILF, a related study might explore the use of specific academic assignments designed to elicit ethical reflection among interns.

Future research may also consider examining different types of internship sectors in the recreation field. For example, do certain recreation internship settings do a more or less adequate job of promoting moral development among recreation interns, and what factors come into play in the various service sectors—e.g., is it the type of setting (e.g., non-profit versus commercial settings), the background of the site supervisor, or whether these settings are accredited.

On a practical level, educators may want to consider the design principles of the ILF in fieldwork requirements other than the internship experience, such as the practicum, service-learning courses, and required lab experiences. Without adequate skills, practice, feedback, coaching, and reflection, students may be uncertain and ineffective in these new practice roles. The seven design principles of the ILF must be continually present if we are to expect growth in professional competencies and cognitive development among our students. Bringing attention to the need for a supportive and pedagogically sound practice-based framework for all of our fieldwork experiences is a significant practical recommendation.

There is much value in looking at the internship experience beyond the traditional entry-level competency perspective. The ILF provides insights into ways educators and supervisors of undergraduate recreation interns might design fieldwork programs to enhance intern moral development. The recreation internship provides students with ample opportunities to not only practice the requisite skills needed for competent practice, but it also is a fertile training ground for student moral development. The authors suggest that there are both practical and ethical reasons to attend to our students' cognitive development during fieldwork experiences.

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