Applied Improvisation in the Sport Management Curriculum

Mandy Barefoot, J. Michael Martinez, and Hannah Sensenbrenner Morrow

Despite the incorporation of a range of engaged learning strategies within sport management education, many sport industry employers still perceive sport management graduates as lacking the soft skills needed to be successful in such a dynamic industry (Keiper et al., 2019). The authors suggest applied improvisation (improv) as a pedagogical tool to address this skills gap. "Applied improv" describes the application of improvisation principles outside of the theatre setting (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Applied improv in the classroom has been presented as an emerging learner-centered approach to instruction (Skinner et al., 2022) that has the potential to meet classroom objectives while simultaneously developing students' communication and soft skills. Many proponents of applied improv in the classroom environment tout its ability to facilitate communication and collaboration while building participant confidence, especially in human services disciplines (e.g., Chan, 2021; Gao et al., 2019; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018). Using constructivism as a theoretical lens, this commentary explores the existing body of applied improvisation literature to provide recommendations for pedagogical applications within the sport management curriculum to address the employability skills gap of entry-level sport employees. The application of the current review will assist sport management educators in developing curricula and coursework while providing a foundation for future empirical studies on the efficacy and outcomes of applied improv within the sport management curriculum.

Keywords: applied improvisation, engaged learning, sport management curriculum development, sport management education, constructivist learning

Mandy Barefoot is a doctoral candidate in sport management in the School of Kinesiology at Louisiana State University. Her research interests include strategic human resources development, the employee experience, and related dimensions of organizational behavior in sport organizations. Email: abaref1@lsu.edu

J. Michael Martinez, PhD, is an associate professor of sport management and director of online programs in the School of Kinesiology at Louisiana State University. His research interests focus on the human resource management function of sport organizations, specifically focusing on work experiences of employees within sport. Email: jmmartinez@lsu.edu

Hannah Sensenbrenner Morrow is a doctoral candidate in the School of Leadership & Human Resource Development at Louisiana State University. Her research interests focus on exploring the transformative potential of applied improvisation, improv comedy, and theater-based experiential learning methodologies to revolutionize leadership and organizational training and development strategies. Email: hsense2@lsu.edu

Applied Improvisation in the
Sport Management Curriculum

Over the past two decades, sport management educators have suggested that instruction and pedagogy within the field be continually addressed and refined to better meet the needs of sport management students, with particular respect to the changing landscape of the sport industry (Chalip, 2006; Dane-Staples, 2013; Light & Dixon, 2007). In doing so, scholars have explored various ways that sport management education could evolve, both within the classroom—including the various modalities of delivery such as in-person, online, and blended—as well as through outside service-based experiences (Manning et al., 2017; Martinez & Barnhill, 2017). Additionally, there has been a growing trend of research regarding high-impact educational practices, specifically focusing on better fostering student engagement and developing the transferrable skills that are vital to success in the sport industry (Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2023; Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015).

One of the primary ways that sport management educators have incorporated engaged student learning has been through various activities and strategies, primarily focusing on the notion of active learning (Edwards & Finger, 2007; Lumpkin & Achen, 2015). At its core, active learning attempts to foster improved student engagement through less passive, one-way experiences, such as traditional course lectures, while focusing on the active participation of the student (Lumpkin & Achen, 2015). Some of the more notable approaches to increasing active participation such as the use of flipped classrooms, role playing, hyperpedagogy, and the use of technologies to keep students engaged during lectures (Dane-Staples, 2019; Edwards & Finger, 2007; Lumpkin & Achen, 2015; Pierce & Middendorf, 2008) have previously been explored in sport management education literature. While the focus on active participation is important, the aforementioned applications of engaged learning in sport management also share the common tenet of student dyadic interactions. Specifically, Dwight and Garrison (2003) suggest that a better learning environment is created as students engage in transactions with other individuals through communication. However, despite integrating these active learning strategies within sport management education over the past decade, sport industry employers continue to perceive sport management graduates as having a soft skills deficit as they transition into entry-level sport employment (Keiper et al., 2019).

In their *Applied Sport Management Skills* textbook, Lussier and Kimball (2009) posit the acquisition of skills as the difference between one simply learning about sport management and becoming a sport manager. They further adapt Katz's three skills model to sport management and identify the following skills

as crucial for sport managers: technical skills, people skills, communication skills, conceptual skills, and decision-making skills. In addition to echoing the demand for technical and people skills, Keiper et al. (2019) found that sport industry employers also noted that many sport management graduates lack job search skills, such as personal career planning, confidence when interviewing, and communicating professionally. This link between soft skills and sport industry employability is similarly reflected in academic literature, as highlighted in Miragaia and Soares's (2017) review of higher education research in the leading sport management journals. Many of these lower-level communication skills are requisite for higher-order interpersonal skills that have been shown to be both impactful in the sport employment ecosystem and lacking in many sport management graduates, such as political skills (Magnusen & Perrewé, 2016) and critical reflection (de Schepper et al., 2021). Soft skills are almost universally in demand across career areas in various segments of the sport industry (Keiper et al., 2019; Raven, 2018; Sesinando et al., 2022). This soft skills gap has been previously discussed in both these U.S.-based and additional European contexts (Wolfhart et al., 2022).

Because active learning strategies hinge on students' interaction with one another, active learning practices that assist students in developing interpersonal communication and other soft skills provide a potential solution to the sport management skills deficit. One such practice that meets the criteria for active learning and can be utilized for soft skills development is applied improvisation, which has been implemented in arts-focused education, but recently has made its way into the general management and tourism-based fields (Rossing & Hoffmann-Longtin, 2016). "Applied improv" describes the application of comedy improvisation principles outside of the theatre setting (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Many proponents of applied improv in the classroom environment tout its ability to facilitate communication and collaboration while building participant confidence, especially in human services disciplines (e.g., Chan, 2021; Gao et al., 2019; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018).

Using constructivism as the theoretical lens, the current project introduces the practice of applied improvisation as an additional method of incorporating student interaction to better facilitate communication and cooperation, while at the same time building participant knowledge, confidence, and critical thinking. Constructivism as a pedagogical theory focuses on student learning as a continually active process in which "learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current or past knowledge" (Brandon & All, 2010, p. 90). Additionally, applying a constructivist framework to education further enhances students' ability to sharpen their critical thinking skills and interaction with other students

(Brandon & All, 2010; Dwight & Garrison, 2003; Light & Dixon, 2007). The constructivist approach is nothing new to sport management education, as prior scholars have noted the benefits of teaching students the applicable skills and knowledge through various interactive and learner-focused strategies (Dane-Staples, 2013; Light & Dixon, 2007).

In order to explore the utility of applied improv as pedagogy in sport management education, two primary research questions guide this study.

RQ1: How has applied improv been utilized as pedagogy in human services and business disciplines or as professional development in these related industries?

RQ2: How can applied improv be incorporated into the sport management curriculum to improve pedagogy or student performance?

What Is Applied Improvisation?

The term applied improvisation (improv) is rapidly growing in popularity in large organizations, corporate offices, and classrooms as a powerful, learner-centered approach that emphasizes intuition, spontaneity, creativity, collaboration, and total engagement of both facilitator and learner (Chan, 2021; Dudeck & McClure, 2018; Gao et al., 2019; Hoffmann-Longtin et al., 2018; Skinner et al., 2022). In short, applied improv is the general term for using theater techniques, exercises, and games to facilitate learning and development outside the theater (Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Although applied improv is the result of taking improv theater techniques out of the theater and into other contexts, improv techniques were introduced to the theater from an educational context. In other words, applied improv is not just a fortuitous result of bringing improv comedy into the classroom for a fun and engaging exercise. Applied improv and improv comedy as we know it today results from the unique teaching philosophy of the innovative, imaginative, and educational pioneer Viola Spolin. Applied improv is not an emerging learner-centered approach to instruction, as Skinner et al. (2022) propose; instead, research suggests it has always been. What is emerging, however, is its popularity, and to fully understand its purpose and rightful place in educational settings, we must revisit its origin and the teachings of Spolin.

Origins of Applied Improvisation

In the early 20th century, at the Hull House in Chicago, Spolin, a social worker and educator, worked under sociologist and recreationist Neva Boyd to create recreation activities for immigrant children. As a student of Boyd, Spolin learned that engaging children in play allows children to foster and develop social skills, adaptability, creativity, and imagination (Sensenbrenner, 2019; Spolin & Sills,

1999). As Spolin's responsibilities at the Hull House included her teaching and entertaining children, she combined her childhood experience playing theater games with Boyd's emphasis on learning and social skills to create theater games that allowed the children to address real-life problem; however, rather than identifying a problem and instructing kids on how to solve the problem, Spolin "would determine a focus or problem for the children to solve as a group; then, as children would start to solve the problem, they would learn through experiencing" (Sensenbrenner, 2019, p. 28). Spolin's non-authoritative games allowed children who were under stress, parental authority, and cultural expectations to experience freedom, spontaneity, intuition, and creativity, which became the foundational principles of her teaching philosophy (Sensenbrenner, 2019; Spolin & Sills, 1999).

Understanding the popularity and impact of Spolin's games is crucial to the accurate history of applied improv. Along with her son and founder of the famed The Second City improv comedy troupe, Paul Sills, Spolin published *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques* (1999), which details not only her teaching philosophy but also hundreds of games for directors, actors, and players of the theater. Readers, players, researchers, and lovers of the theater should note that *Improvisation for the Theater* (1999), revered as an actor's bible, genius, and "basic research" by famous actors such as Rob Reiner and Alan Alda, was not born out of the theater—it was born out of improvisation for youth, growth, development, and learning. What we know today as applied improv, the general term for using theater techniques, exercises, and games to facilitate learning and development outside of the theater (Dudeck & McClure, 2018, 2021), is the original form of improv in disguise. While improv was made popular in the theater and made famous by comedians on stage, its origins were in the classroom, and through the efforts of applied improvisation professionals worldwide it is returning to the classroom.

Applied Improvisation Today

In 2002, the Applied Improvisation Network (AIN) was established to connect applied improv professionals and to further develop the field and practice of applied improv through research, workshops, and an annual conference (The Applied Improvisation Network, n.d.). As the practice quickly spread worldwide, AIN sought to create a common definition and foundational principles of applied improvisation (Tint & Froerer, 2014). Consequently, in 2014, AIN completed a Delphi study that included 27 applied improv experts worldwide (Tint & Froerer, 2014). The study identified 10 elements of applied improv:

- Make your partner look good
- Yes, and …

- Atmosphere of play
- Curious listening
- Complete acceptance
- Flexibility/Spontaneity
- Focus on the here and now
- Risk-taking
- Personal awareness/mindfulness
- Balance of freedom and structure

Additionally, the study describes "a non-linear process that [applied improv] practitioners tend to use ... Teaching or demonstration of the skill; Experiential application by the participants; Reflection or debriefing that leverages the experience to improve other areas or develop new insights/meanings" (Tint & Froerer, 2014, p. 2). Of critical importance when incorporating applied improv into the classroom is the element of reflection; without reflection, players are, in fact, just playing games.

Reflection, one of the constructivist outcomes connected to engaged learning (Cattaneo, 2017), allows players to not only make meaning of what they experience but to transfer that experience from the theater or classroom to their personal lives. Reflection can be described as prolonged consideration of a recent experience that links that experience to one's pre-existing knowledge through commonalities or differences (Gustafson & Bennett, 2002). Given that one of the goals of reflection is increasing students' depth of understanding, meaningful reflection requires thoughtful course design that allows the time and space for students to engage in critical reflection (Moon, 2013). This time and space can be created by using multiple instructional techniques in one content area, including formative assessment (Denton, 2011), class discussions that follow active learning exercises, or reflective writing assignments such as journaling (Gustafson & Bennett, 2002). For sport management students specifically, critical reflection is not solely a learning pathway to engage with classroom content but also a skill that may influence their future employability (de Schepper et al., 2021).

For those who have not experienced applied improv or understand how learning can occur through such a non-traditional practice, learning and growth through applied improv is best supported through Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory "takes into account the learning, the individual, and the environment in which the individual operates" (Gibson, 2004, p. 198). Most importantly, the Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes that learning occurs because of reciprocity between the individual, behavior, and the environment, each influencing the other (Gibson, 2004). This same notion is seen through applied improv, as plays are

encouraged to act in response to their environment, their counterparts or stage partners, and within personal morals and principles (Dudeck & McClure, 2018).

Similarly, Kolb's ELT emphasizes that learning occurs because of the interactions between the individual and the environment and where individuals are engaged in, adapting to, and resolving conflicts (Kolb & Kolb, 2009), a familiar process in Spolin's theater games. ELT also emphasizes that learning is the creation of knowledge through experience by the learner (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). This emphasis aligns with Spolin's non-authoritative, learner-centered teaching philosophy but departs from today's popular teacher-centered philosophy, where the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge. Most important to learning and development through applied improv is the cycle of experiential learning—"experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting" (Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p. 44). Other applications of Kolb's ELT within sport management degree programs have resulted in advocation for increased incorporation and quality of experiential learning activities such as internships to increase students' job preparedness and employability (e.g., Sattler, 2018; Southall et al., 2003).

Applied Improvisation in Academic Settings

The interdisciplinary nature of the sport management curriculum and the diverse range of topics included under the umbrella of sport management research makes any broad statement about the discipline of sport management virtually impossible to develop without looking to a collection of our disciplinary analogues. Other field-specific discussions inform the current commentary about applying applied improv to meet specific skill development and pedagogical goals. This literature in many human service and business disciplines has explored the utility of applied improvisation in two main areas: improvised communication as a skill needed for practitioners in that field (e.g., sales and healthcare) and applied improvisation as a pedagogical tool used to deliver course content and meet course objectives. For example, Rossing and Hoffman-Longtin's (2016) discussion of the utility of applied improv in higher education faculty professional development exemplifies this distinction by presenting applied improv workshops for faculty members as both improving teaching (pedagogy) and organizational development within research teams (skill).

Healthcare, Education, and Human Services Fields

The practicalities of applied improv exercises in higher education environments have perhaps been most extensively explored by academics in various healthcare and human services education sub-fields. The duality of applied improv, both as a pedagogical tool and a skill for practitioners in these fields, is a recurring

theme, especially in studies exploring the impact of stand-alone applied improv workshops for students and faculty. Applied improv workshops aimed at students in these fields have led to increases in self-confidence (Bender et al., 2022; Cecco & Masiero, 2019), improved communication skills (Bender et al., 2022; Donovan et al., 2020), and relationship-building with peers (Cecco & Masiero, 2019; Donovan et al., 2020). In line with Rossing and Hoffman-Longtin (2016), additional studies on the efficacy of applied improv workshops for higher education faculty have been suggested to improve communication with a diverse audience (Muldoon, 2022) while leading to improved student engagement (Berk & Trieber, 2009) and performance (Massie, 2018). Applied improv activities are also well-received by both students (Cecco & Masiero, 2019) and faculty (Massie, 2018).

Tint et al. (2015) discussed how applied improv can be used to cultivate the crucial skills demanded of those responding to humanitarian crises. These skills include flexibility, adaptability, comfort with ambiguity, effective rapid decision-making, and leadership in stressful or quickly developing situations. While the focus is primarily on large-scale humanitarian efforts like disaster relief, Tint et al. (2015) posit that these skills are needed in a wide variety of incident responses where "rapid-fire decisions are … required of those whose jobs do not typically carry this responsibility" (p. 76). The cornerstone of Tint et al. (2015) positioning applied improv as an incident response is the idea that simulation or role-play activities are content-based learning activities, while applied improv exercises develop the skills needed to be successful in such activities and in the real-world scenarios these activities are designed to simulate. Indeed, role play seeks to mimic real-world scenarios (Clapper, 2010), while applied improv develops creative skills through absurd and novel scenarios. While real-world situations in sport management rarely reach the absurdity that one would experience within theatrical improvisation, there is credence to the idea that quick thinking and adaptive response are valuable skills in communication. Considering non-traditional branding, promotions and sales tactics within minor league sports have been used to keep fans engaged (Dwyer et al., 2011); the same can be said for applied improv in the class. The structure and "rules" of applied improv exercises are contrived to meet the goals of creative thinking, while role play seeks to acclimate students to already established norms and processes in realistically simulated environments.

Business Fields

Applied improv develops and requires many of the same skills requisite in modern business environments: collaboration and teamwork, brainstorming, self-reliance, and clear presentation abilities (Mourey, 2020). These soft skills, combined with other dimensions of creative thinking, provide an imperatively

crucial complement to the quantitative and info-driven areas of business, such as accounting, finance, and economics (Schlee & Harich, 2014). Mourey (2020) also suggests that applied improv techniques could be used to develop agility and divergent thinking in business environments.

Perhaps most relevant to the current commentary's focus, Rocco and Whalen (2014) assessed the use of an improvisation exercise, a game called "Yes, and …," within a sports sales course. Using an experimental design, Rocco and Whalen found that students who participated in the "Yes, and …" exercise performed better in the experiential sales project in the course and gave the course higher evaluations than students who did not participate. "Yes, and …" is perhaps the most common and accessible improv game in that it is simple to learn and execute. However, the game's core is also indicative of one of the fundamental mechanisms of any improv exercise: accepting what is happening and moving the interaction forward to an end that is co-created by all participants.

Following the model of teaching the "Yes, and …" tactic within sales classes identified by Rocco and Whalen (2014), there are various ways this can be implemented in a sport management course. Imagine a scenario where a customer and a sales rep are engaged in a conversation. The key focus of the "Yes, and …" exercise stems on the words "yes," which signals an acknowledgement of the customer's comment, while using "and" to provide their own statement. The goal in this interaction is mutual agreement to some type of solution that is seen as beneficial for both parties. Implementation of such an exercise is possible in interactions in which there are relational exchanges, which is a key hallmark in traditional sport management courses such as facilities management, marketing, and leadership. Some examples of this are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Hypothetical Real-World Examples Involved "Yes, and …"

Course Type	Person A	Person B
Marketing/Sales	Fan: One of my biggest concerns in attending a game is parking.	Marketing staff: (Yes), a lot of other fans have that concern, (and) this ticket package comes with reserved parking included.
Communications/Media Relations	Journalist: I have a tight deadline for the game story tonight, and I need to work later. But the facilities staff keeps moving our chairs. I can't work like this.	Media Relations staff: (Yes), I've noticed they do that as part of their closing process, (and) I've worked it out where I'll put your chair away. So, you'll have more time.
Leadership	Employee: I know I said yes to meeting on the finance budget, but with all of our spring events, I haven't had the time to work on this.	Leader: (Yes), there has been a lot going on with our various spring activities, (and) we need to find a more efficient way to get these projects assigned.

Returning to the highest-order utility of applied improv and its ability to open and develop meaningful lines of interpersonal communication in team environments, Aylesworth (2008) argues that many core tenets of entertaining improv theatre performance also translate to productivity in collaborative environments. These tenets include bringing confidence to the interaction, supporting the ideas and suggestions of others, trusting others to provide help when help is needed, taking risks to explore new ideas, and having fun. Aylesworth applies these tenets, along with the opposing follies of improv performance, to "deny, order, repeat, and question" (p. 109) the contributions of others, to develop a holistic improv mindset: "a predisposition to collaborate rather than compete" (p. 108). Aylesworth addresses explicitly how the improv mindset can mitigate the disadvantages of case-based activities popular in marketing coursework that rely on active, appropriate, and equitable student participation to be the most effective. However, this rationale also could seemingly apply to other classroom environments that rely on student collaboration or group discussions.

Integrating Applied Improv in the Sport Management Curriculum

The preceding review identifies the following skills areas that have been developed using applied improv exercises in fields related to sport management.

Skills Areas

1. *Communication Skills:* Improv exercises promote effective communication, active listening, and quick thinking while building self-confidence in public speaking scenarios.
2. *Leadership and Decision-Making:* Improv activities encourage participants to take on informal and formal leadership roles, make decisions under pressure, and develop confidence in their abilities to do so.
3. *Problem-Solving:* Applied improvisation exercises simulate complex interpersonal scenarios, requiring students to quickly develop innovative solutions in a dynamic setting. Improvisation helps develop students' problem-solving skills by encouraging them to think creatively and incorporate other team members' ideas to synthesize solutions.
4. *Teamwork and Collaboration:* Improv activities allow students to work productively together while creating interpersonal connections and fostering comfortability with other participants. Students learn how to support and rely on their teammates by engaging in improvisation exercises, improving teamwork and cooperation skills.

5. *Adaptability and Resilience:* Applied improvisation helps students develop adaptability and resilience, enabling them to navigate unforeseen circumstances and challenges. Practicing improvisation teaches students to embrace uncertainty, remain flexible, and adjust their plans and strategies accordingly.

These five skill areas correlate with many skills identified by Lussier and Kimball (2009) and Keiper et al. (2019) as contributing to the perceived employability of sport management students. While many of these skills are included in many of the competing and overlapping definitions of "people skills," "soft skills," and "communications skills," the five skills areas that applied improv exercises can strengthen can also be grouped under a more extensive umbrella definition of *meta-skills,* which are skills that assist in the acquisition of other skills or knowledge. Prasittichok and Klaykaew (2022) position meta-skills as contributing to an overall mindset of openness that contributes to lifelong learning. This positioning seemingly parallels Aylesworth's (2008) discussion of the improv mindset that similarly centers on openness but as a means to enhance collaboration.

Developing Meta-Skills of Sport Management Students

The prevalence of internship requirements and other culminating experiences in sport management degree programs provide additional experiential learning environments for students to develop these skills outside of the traditional classroom. The Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) describes these "Integrative Experiences" as learning environments and assessments that require students to "demonstrate the capacity to synthesize and apply knowledge" (2022, p. 19). Noteworthy in this definition is the use of the word "demonstrate" rather than a term like "acquire." This terminology reinforces the idea that students should possess some functional set of meta-skills before entering an internship or other integrative experience.

Based on an experiential learning framework, Brown et al. (2018) applied a four-phase model for how educators manage internships in sport management: Strategy, Participation, Assessment, and Integration. Within Phase 1 (Strategy), the focus is on the role of educators in learner readiness. During this pre-internship phase, Brown et al. (2018) suggest that developing personal and critical reflection skills is of "paramount importance" (p. 78). Similar to the current study, Brown et al. draw from related health fields to suggest reflective practices such as narrative journaling to contribute to developing reflective skills and contributing to personal growth. Sport management instructors that incorporate the

requisite post-participation reflection on applied improv participation during this internship preparation phase could assist sport management students in developing crucial meta-skills while teaching them to engage in meaningful reflection on their participation experiences. When students engage in reflection on their specific responses within the applied improv exercises, they begin to develop a knowledge bank of how they adapted to specific, out-of-the-box scenarios. As internship experiences are included to mimic real-world situations in the future, applied improv practices "stimulate creativity, giving students a larger repertory of responses" (Rocco & Whalen, 2014, p. 202). Moreover, applied improv exercises and subsequent reflection adds to the already fundamental benefits of experiential learning such as building confidence and higher levels of self-efficacy (Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2023). Additionally, Brown et al.'s (2018) model assumes that sport management students are exposed to some form of dedicated internship preparation coursework. While coursework such as this may provide dedicated space for meta-skill development that could be accomplished through applied improv exercises, incorporating applied improv exercises across other sport management coursework could reasonably achieve many of the same Phase 1 student skill development outcomes in programs that do not offer a specific pre-internship or professional development course.

Regardless of how individual programs choose to utilize applied improv exercises within their curricula, the AIN and other applied improv researchers and proponents provide numerous resources on facilitating well-established improv games like "Yes, and …" and other classroom exercises. Like Spolin and Sills (1999), Dudeck and McClure's (2018) *Applied Improvisation: Leading and Creating Beyond the Theatre* provides more detail on the theoretical foundations on each applied improv exercise before providing detailed instructions on how to lead participants through the activity. These example activities can be modified by sport management-focused applied improv facilitators to include a sport-specific context. For example, an exercise that Dudeck and McClure call "Remember the Time" (p. 174) directs participants to co-create a cohesive story by reminiscing together about a fictional scenario. This exercise could be adapted to a sport-specific environment by directing the students to "reminisce" about a time when they attended or participated in a sporting event together. Similarly, the "What I Like About That" exercise (Dudeck & McClure, 2018, p. 159) has participants each contribute one feature of a product. Sport management instructors could adapt this activity to focus on a sport product. Reflection questions on these activities could focus on how the students felt during the experience, how they related to other participants, and how they believe it could be applied in everyday interactions within sport. In addition to how the use of applied improv exercises can be empirically linked to positive student outcomes

in sport management programs, the efficacy in adapting these exercises for sport management students' skill development are certainly worthy research topics for those interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning within the sport management discipline.

Conclusion

Overall, the integration of applied improvisation in sport management education holds significant promise for creating engaging and interactive learning environments that prepare students for success in the dynamic and evolving sport industry by helping students develop meta-skills that enhance sport management students' internship experiences and future employability. While the present article argues for incorporating applied improvisation in the sport management curriculum, it is essential to note that this is an additional tool that sport management educators can utilize within course instruction to enhance or support current engaged learning strategies. Specifically, the notion of applied improv as integral to developing sport management students' meta-skills speaks to the further idea that sport management introduces several "transferable skills" for students (Braunstein-Minkove et al., 2023). Using an engaged-learning approach, applied improvisation enhances students' ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and make sound decisions under pressure. At the same time, incorporating applied improvisation into the sport management curriculum requires careful consideration of its implementation, including training for instructors and designing appropriate activities and assessments to meet specific curriculum or skills goals. The requisite empirical research needed to explore the specific applications of applied improvisation more deeply in sport management education and its impact on student performance and learning outcomes additionally represents an emerging area of research for sport management pedagogy scholarship.

References

Applied Improvisation Network. (n.d.). *What is applied improvisation?* https://apin.memberclicks. net/what-is-applied-improvisation-

Aylesworth, A. (2008). Improving case discussion with an improv mind-set. *Journal of Marketing Education, 30*(2), 106–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475308317703

Bender, M., Veenstra, J., & Yoon, S. (2022). Improving interprofessional communication: Conceptualizing, operationalizing and testing a healthcare improvisation communication workshop. *Nurse Education Today, 119.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105530

Berk, R. A., & Trieber, R. H. (2009). Whose classroom is it, anyway? Improvisation as a teaching tool. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 20*(3), 29–60.

Brandon, A. F., & All, A. C. (2010). Constructivism theory analysis and application to curricula. *Nursing Education Perspective, 31*(2), 89–92.

Braunstein-Minkove, J. R., & DeLuca, J. R. (2015). Effectively adapting the sport management curricula: Harnessing internal and external resources to address industry-specific needs. *Schole: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education, 2,* 12–30.

Braunstein-Minkove, J. R., DeLuca, J. R., & Baucum, S. R. (2023). Transferable skills: Preparing sport management students for careers both within and outside the sports industry. *Sport Management Education Journal, 17*(2), 135–143. https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2022-0011

Brown, C., Willett, J., Goldfine, R., & Goldfine, B. (2018). Sport management internships: Recommendations for improving upon experiential learning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 22,* 75–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2018.02.001

Cattaneo, K. H. (2017). Telling active learning pedagogies apart: From theory to practice. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research, 6*(2), 144–152.

Cecco, S., & Masiero, A. (2019). Improving language and interpreting Skills: A teaching experience. *SCENARIO: Journal for Performative Teaching, Learning, Research, 13*(1), 42–62. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.13.1.3

Chalip, L. (2006). Toward a distinctive sport management discipline. *Journal of Sport Management, 20,* 1–21.

Chan, G. H. (2021). Applied theater: Using improvisation in social services as an illustrating example. *Journal of Social Work, 21*(4), 871–890.

Clapper, T. C. (2010). Role play and simulation. *The Education Digest, 75*(8), 39.

Commission on Sport Management Accreditation. (2022, March). *Accreditation principles manual & guidelines for self-study preparation.* https://www.cosmaweb.org/uploads/2/4/9/4/24949946/accreditation_principles_march_2022.pdf

Dane-Staples, E. (2013). Constructing a sport management classroom. *Sport Management Education Journal, 7*(1), 25–33. https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.7.1.25

Dane-Staples, E. (2019). Assessing a two-pronged approach to active learning in sport sociology classrooms. *Sport Management Education Journal, 13*(1), 11–22. https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2018-0019

Denton, D. (2011). Reflection and learning: Characteristics, obstacles, and implications. *Educational Philosophy & Theory, 43*(8), 838–852. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2009.00600.x

de Schepper, J., Sotiriadou, P., & Hill, B. (2021). The role of critical reflection as an employability skill in sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 21*(2), 280–301.

Donovan, E. E., Brown, L. E., Rush, S. K., Greenwell, M. R., Table, B., Zhu, Y., & Kearns, K. D. (2020). An applied improvisational pharmacy communication workshop implemented during orientation for first-year pharmacy students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84*(1), 15–21. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7250

Dudeck, T. R., & McClure, C. (2018). *Applied improvisation: Leading, collaborating, and creating beyond the theatre.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

Dudeck, T. R., & McClure, C. (Eds.). (2021). *The applied improvisation mindset: Tools for transforming organizations and communities.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

Dwight, J., & Garrison, J. (2003). A manifesto for instructional technology: Hyperpedagogy. *Teachers College Record, 105*(5), 699–728.

Dwyer, B., LeCrom, C. W., Tomasini, N., & Smith, G. A. (2011). The Richmond What? The naming of a minor league baseball franchise. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 20,* 56–65.

Edwards, A., & Finger, G. (2007). eLearning and sport management: Hyperpedagogy possibilities. *Sport Management Review, 10*(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(07)70011-6

Gao, L., Peranson, J., Nyhof-Young, J., Kapoor, E., & Rezmovitz, J. (2019). The role of "improv" in health professional learning: A scoping review. *Medical Teacher, 41*(5), 561–568.

Gibson, S. K. (2004). Social learning (cognitive) theory and implications for human resource development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 6*(2), 193–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422304263429

Gustafson, K. L., & Bennett Jr, W. (2002). *Promoting learner reflection: Issues and difficulties emerging from a three-year study.* Air Force Research Laboratory. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA472616

Hoffmann-Longtin, K., Rossing, J. P., & Weinstein, E. (2018). Twelve tips for using applied improvisation in medical education. *Medical Teacher, 40*(4), 351–356. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2017.1387239

Keiper, M. C., Sieszputowski, J., Morgan, T., & Mackey, M. J. (2019). Employability skills: A case study on a business-oriented sport management program. *E-Journal of Business Education and Scholarship of Teaching, 13*(1), 59–68.

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development. In C. V. Fukami & S. Armstrong (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of management learning, education, and development* (pp. 42–68). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038

Light, R., & Dixon, M. A. (2007). Contemporary developments in sport pedagogy and their implications for sport management education. *Sport Management Review, 10*(2), 159–175.

Lumpkin, A., & Achen, R. M. (2015). Flipping a class: Active learning and more of it. *Sport Management Education Journal, 9*(2), 79–90. https://doi.org/10.1123/SMEJ.2014-0042

Lussier, R., & Kimball, D. (2009). *Applied sport management skills.* Human Kinetics.

Magnusen, M., & Perrewé, P. L. (2016). The role of social effectiveness in leadership: A critical review and lessons for sport management. *Sport Management Education Journal, 10*(1), 64–77.

Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., & Jenny, S. E. (2017). Pedagogical innovations for the millennial sport management student: Socrative and twitter. *Sport Management Education Journal, 11*(1), 45–54. https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2016-0014

Martinez, J. M., & Barnhill, C. R. (2017). Enhancing the student experience in online sport management programs: A review of the Community of Inquiry framework. *Sport Management Education Journal, 11*(1), 24–33.

Massie, D. (2018). The effects of improv-based faculty development. *Journal of Faculty Development, 32*(2), 75–89.

Miragaia, D. A. M., & Soares, J. A. P. (2017). Higher education in sport management: A systematic review of research topics and trends. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 21,* 101–116. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.09.001

Moon, J. A. (2013). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice.* Routledge.

Mourey, J. A. (2020). Improv comedy and modern marketing education: Exploring consequences for divergent thinking, self-efficacy, and collaboration. *Journal of Marketing Education, 42*(2), 134–148. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475318822087

Muldoon, K. M. (2022). IMPROVing communication about diversity, equity, and inclusion in health professions education. *The Anatomical Record, 305*(4), 1000–1018. https://doi.org/10.1002/ar.24864

Pierce, D., & Middendorf, J. (2008). Evaluating the effectiveness of role playing in the sport management curriculum. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, 4*(2/3), 277. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2008.018652

Prasittichok, P., & Klaykaew, K. K. (2022). Meta-skills development needs assessment among undergraduate students. *Heliyon, 8*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e08787

Raven, S. (2018). Mind the gap: Sport management education and employability auto-ethnographical analysis of sport management education and the sports fitness industry. *Education + Training, 60*(5), 458–472. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-11-2017-0179

Rocco, R. A., & Whalen, D. J. (2014). Teaching Yes, And … improv in sales classes: Enhancing student adaptive selling skills, sales performance, and teaching evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Education, 36*(2), 197–208. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475314537278

Rossing, J. P., & Hoffmann-Longtin, K. (2016). Improv(ing) the academy: Applied improvisation as a strategy for educational development. *To Improve the Academy, 35*(2), 303–325. https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20044

Sattler, L. A. (2018). From classroom to courtside: An examination of the experiential learning practices of sport management faculty. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 22,* 52–62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2018.02.002

Sesinando, A., Segui-Urbaneja, J., & Teixeira, M. C. (2022). Professional development, skills, and competences in sports: A survey in the field of sport management among public managers. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport, 22*(11), 2800–2809. https://doi.org/10.7752/jpes.2022.11355

Schlee, R. P., & Harich, K. R. (2014). Teaching creativity to business students: How well are we doing? *Journal of Education for Business, 89*(3), 133–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2013.781987

Sensenbrenner, H. F. (2019). Improv comedy and identity formation: The importance of serious leisure in emerging adulthood. [Master's thesis, Texas A&M University]. OAKTrust. https://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/187922

Skinner, R., Harlow, D., Gunther, D., Wesolowski, K. J., Marckwordt, J., & Muller, A. (2022). Facilitating learner-centered interactions through applied improvisation. *Connected Science Learning, 4*(3). https://par.nsf.gov/biblio/10334067-facilitating-learner-centered-interactions-through-applied-improvisation

Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., LeGrande, D., & Han, P. (2003). Sport management practica: A metadiscrete experiential learning model. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 12*(1), 27–36.

Spolin, V., & Sills, P. (1999). *Improvisation for the theater: A handbook of teaching and directing techniques.* Northwestern University Press.

The Second City. (n.d.). *History.* https://www.secondcity.com/history

Tint, B., & Froerer, A. (2014). Delphi study summary. Applied improvisation network. https://www.appliedimprovisationnetwork.org/assets/docs/Delphi-Study-Summary.pdf

Tint, B. S., McWaters, V., & van Driel, R. (2015). Applied improvisation training for disaster readiness and response: Preparing humanitarian workers and communities for the unexpected. *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management, 5*(1), 73–94. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHLSCM-12-2013-0043

Wohlfart, O., Adam, S., & Hovemann, G. (2022). Aligning competence-oriented qualifications in sport management higher education with industry requirements: An importance-performance analysis. *Industry and Higher Education, 36*(2), 163–176. https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222211016284