Critical and Ethical Thinking in Sport Management: Philosophical Rationales and Examples of Methods

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Dwight H. Zakus
Griffith University

David Cruise Malloy
University of Regina

Allan Edwards
Griffith University

Critical thinking is recognised as a necessary central competency of university graduates in a variety of professional fields. Many articles identify and expound on the need for critical thinking pedagogy allied with sound moral and ethical thought and behaviour. This paper seeks to identify the central aspects of critical thinking within the ethical conceptual terms of ontology, epistemology, and axiology for sport management pedagogy. Within the concept of axiology is the basis of ethical thinking and acting. We weave the discussion of critical thinking within an ethical basis toward practical pedagogical activities for developing and advancing critical thinking skills and abilities in sport management graduates.

Dwight Zakus is a Senior Lecturer in Sport Management at Griffith University. David Cruise Malloy is a Professor on the Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies at the University of Regina. Allan Edwards is a Senior Lecturer in Health and Physical Education at Griffith University. Email for Dwight Zakus is d.zakus@griffith.edu.au
Many tertiary educators in sport management programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels can be accused of producing technicist administrators rather than managers. Students are guided through textbooks with information on how they should address their work, how to think about problems and solutions, how to be “checklist” managers, and how to produce results with some sort of correctness and necessity. We question, along with Frisby (2005), whether these are the sort of professional sport managers we seek to develop and advance the field. Are these the types of knowledge and thought processes we seek for the future of sport organisations? What type of praxis results from this truncated view of education?

To prepare sport management graduates to be productive, innovative leaders in the wide variety of existing sport organisations, we must ensure that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. It is widely argued that our graduates develop critical and ethical thinking abilities to enhance their careers and their lives. University graduate outcomes, in fact, list this type of thinking as a requisite feature of their graduates. Also, professional bodies such as the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) and business school accreditation bodies such as The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business and the EQUIS program of the European Foundation for Management Development also list these types of thinking as curricular necessities.

This paper seeks to address a gap in many writings on critical and ethical thinking while enhancing the interface of theory and practice (Zakus & Edwards, 2006). This paper premises this interface by first discussing critical thinking from a philosophical basis to provide rationales for professional praxis, then makes practical suggestions to enhance students’ professional praxis. First, the identification and background of the bases of different types of critical and ethical thinking are explored. This includes a discussion of critical thinking and categories of ethical thought. Second, the pedagogical tools to develop these abilities are described and discussed. Conclusions are drawn from the links between critical thinking, ethics, and pedagogical practice. The goal of such a synthesis is toward the notion of professional praxis in sport management. Effort must be made, not only to develop curricula that include ethics and critical thinking, but also to provide an active and functional synthesis of these essential components of the liberally educated, reflective, and reflexive “praxical” individual.

**Critical Thinking: An Exegesis**

In our personal and professional lives we rarely have the opportunity to think and act as we please. In both spheres of our life we must make informed decisions to act. Action without thought can be chaotic or perhaps dangerous. Knowing and acting are two sides of the way we carry out our lives (i.e., our lived experience). Similarly, action does not occur without some form of conscious thought included. As we urge
students to become authentic (cf. Macquarrie, 1972) in their lives, it is important that they have an understanding of the knowledge, ethics, and actions that are part of that life. The question is, What is it we use to “find our way”? And, how do we approach the process of thinking through the way to go?

Aristotle argued forcefully that the fundamental obligation of the human was to flourish (i.e., eudaimonia). This was to be accomplished through a life of contemplation, of reason and of virtuous praxis. This contemplative quality was perceived to be superior to other sorts of life pursuits because it was deemed to be continuous, self-sufficient and unique to humanity. The essence of this contemplative life was the ability to think and to think well. Almost two millennia later, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1966), suggested that our ability to think had eroded to the point in which we have forgotten how to contemplate holistically.

We had in fact succumbed to the tendency to think calculatively at the expense of meditative or reflective thinking. For Heidegger, calculative thinking is concerned with logic, utility, description, categorisation, focus, and purpose; reflective thinking is characterised by releaseament, openness, and meaning. Reflective thinking focuses not upon the specific, but upon the general; not upon the figure, but upon the ground or the light that illuminates the figure (not unlike Plato’s allegory of the shadows of the cave). While calculative thinking is necessary for any of us to operate in the mainstream “everydayness” of Western society, we will not come to understand ourselves if we do not think reflectively. The implication of Heidegger’s message is but an echo of Socrates’ call for deeper cognitive introspection, “the unexamined life is not worth living.”

Whether we refer to Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, or Heidegger, we are talking about critical thinking. This is a cognitive activity in which the individual considers an issue through a variety of lenses, processes the acquired data, and appropriates it for his or her own knowledge base. Critical thinking involves neither the blind acceptance of dogma nor the regurgitation of the perceived infallible utterances of authorities. It is an authentic activity that results in owned (i.e., appropriated) knowledge.

While critical thinking has been and continues to be perceived as an essential quality in any educated person, it can be argued, as Heidegger did, that it is not a skill that is readily observable either in our student population or in the population at large. Zeigler (1994) wrote of the need for critical thinking in the curricula for the allied professionals in sport studies, including sport management. Frisby (2005) also argued for the inclusion of such thinking in the teaching and research skills inculcated in sport management students. She argued for both a critical sport studies (CSS) and a critical management studies (CMS), following Alvesson and Deetz (2000) in this task. Likewise, Clegg, Courpasson, and Phillips (2006) point to Frisby’s claim and the link to our premise in the following: “critical management research, on the other hand, is much more reflexive and consciously examines its philosophical foundations, its theoretical assumptions, and its methods” (p. 282). Although these
approaches are highly important to the education and future functioning of sport managers, both CSS and CSM are involved paradigmatic arguments that are beyond this paper and are more focussed on the important management ability to do proper research. Sport management teachers are encouraged to read and understand these approaches as they build on what is proposed here.

Previous works (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2003; Malloy & Zakus, 1995; Zakus & Malloy, 1996) have argued, in various ways, for a fuller curriculum and practice. These arguments point to the lacunae in most curricula used to develop sport managers and to ways in which this can be overcome. To date, this work has primarily focussed upon the ethical aspects of that development. This paper seeks to go beyond this fundamentally important aspect of sport management. The first premise argued is that ethics and critical thinking are two sides of the same dialectic unity of the cognitive, affective, and practical bases of professional praxis. Students must be taught, assisted, and encouraged to explore the underlying thought processes and value positions. In other words, the focus is on the individual’s ability to think and act as the basis for a sound expert praxis and organisational engagement. This framework involves three elements of philosophy: ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Ontology: Frames of Thought and Action

Ontology is the study of existence. Specifically, we are concerned with the existence of oneself, of others, of roles occupied, and of organisations and their purpose. These are concerns that we rarely contemplate, critically or otherwise, and more rarely articulate. Generally, we accept the fact that we and others exist, yet fail to question the nature of this existence. Would ontological knowledge provide us with a link to our approach to truth (epistemology) and behaviour (axiology)? We believe it would.

Each of us has an ontological basis that is the foundation for how we observe, think and act in the world. This ontological basis is socially constructed for us and by us, as it is through social action and interaction that we develop and use knowledge (Malloy & Zakus, 2004). Through the lifelong learning process of socialisation, we come to develop our personality, knowledge base and membership in society. On the other hand, we use our knowledge in different social locations and roles, which demands that we use appropriate knowledge in those different settings.

This section first discusses the personal perspectives we develop through socialisation. The second section looks at how professional perspectives are part of education. Finally, the third section provides a discussion of how the two perspectives exist within a professional person.
Personal Perspectives

Saul (1995), in his critique of technocratic thought and action in modern society, argues that “there is no need for universities to turn out 21-year old specialists equipped with no memory of their civilization’s experience, no ethical context, no sense of the larger shape of their society” (p. 176). While there is much to Saul’s broader argument of technical rationality as ideology, we wish to discuss the points he raises in terms of personal philosophies as the basis for discussing professional identities and action. In particular, the way in which they are epistemic, value-laden and contextual.

We argue that students must be led to understand their beliefs about the essence of themselves and others, of leadership/followership and of the organisation (i.e., of management theory), and of the perception of the good life we all seek to achieve. This is perhaps the first thing that students must understand and explore. It forms the basis for other sub elements (i.e., epistemology, axiology).

As our cognitive structures are learned from others and in many different social contexts, we need critical thinking to develop and reveal authentic thought and behaviour. To explore this framework we need to agree that socialisation (or enculturation) describes the process through which we become members of a cultural grouping (sport team, sport organisation, graduates of sport management programs) and, ultimately, of society. When we speak of a culture, we are identifying a complete way of life (Williams, 1977).

This also is central to our particularistic perspectives (Wolstertorff, 1996) that are the basis of our narrative identities (i.e., our personality and social being that are expressed through language and gesture). In other words, it is our actively constructed everyday knowledge that gives us cognitive (knowing) access to our reality (lived experience) that we espouse (in dialogue), that is communicated through our thoughts and actions (that is here identified as praxis).

A key element of the particularistic cognitive structure is that it embraces values. This allows us privileged cognitive access to facts of relevancy to our lives (Wolsterstorff, 1996), and to notice and believe in particular parts of the infinite chaos of the world. Whereas knowledge itself filters through ideas, this appreciative part of our knowledge filters through values. Here facts and values, or beliefs and normative judgments, are linked. They are both parts of one’s cognitive and moral structure. For better or worse, these value filters form our biases.

Humans Are Malleable

We change as we pass through life. In these different social and cultural contexts we encounter and work our way through different ideas, beliefs, values and norms. The degree to which these aspects affect our thinking and acting depends upon how skilled we are at thinking about these new elements. Certainly, many of these new perspectives are ideological. This makes the challenge greater, especially in terms
of one’s values. For it is at this point that the powers of different ideologies make the greatest challenge to our personal, espoused cognitive structure and ultimately our professional praxis. These personal perspectives provide us with theories-in-use (Schön, 1987). This is where we begin our uniquely human activity in the world.

Professional Perspectives
A central activity to the development of a profession is establishing a specialised body of knowledge which is passed on to future practitioners, carefully protected and developed, and to which claims of being a professional are rigorously controlled. The hallmark of a professional person is the ability to make sound, knowledgeable, and ethical decisions based on a number of pieces of information and ideas. Donald Schön (1987) wrote that

professional practitioners bring different personal perspectives to their professional work, but they also share a common body of explicit, more or less systematically organised professional knowledge and what Geoffrey Vickers has called an “appreciative system” – the set of values, preferences, and norms in terms of which they make sense of practice situations, formulated goals and directions for action, and determine what constitutes acceptable professional conduct. (p. 33)

This professional praxis is shared, particular, and ameliorated by various cultural contexts of professional life. A re-socialisation takes place and personal perspectives are challenged. This process has potential contradictory and confusing aspects (Liedtka, 1989). Brookfield (1991) identified two activities in this process. First, one must identify and challenge held assumptions to develop a new “contextual awareness” and to then explore and imagine the alternatives presented by professional praxis (pp. 15-22). These two activities are seen to be “interconnected in bewildering and idiosyncratic configurations according to the people and contexts involved” (p. 15). How one proceeds, and how well one does in this activity depends on what Paul (1990) identifies as monological (involving one logic or weak sense) versus multilogical (involving many logics or strong sense) cognitive activity (p. 246). The obvious weakness of the first form demands no further discussion at this point; it is well discussed in Zeigler’s (1994, 1995) works. The second, however, is important. Paul (1990) describes the multilogic approach as both dialogic and dialectic.

A dialogic approach implies dialogue. It involves speaking and listening activities where many individuals systematically enter genuine discussion with others. Dialogue of this type is entered with empathy for the thinking of others. This is certainly central to the professions. Paul (1990) argues that this allows us to use the thinking of others or to reason hypothetically from the assumptions of others in our thinking. Simply put, dialogic thinking involves the “extended exchange between different points of view or frames of reference” (p. 246).

Dialectical thinking occurs when ideas or reasoning come into conflict with each other and we need to assess their various strengths and weaknesses. Here the
notion of contradictions is acknowledged. Both dialogic and dialectic thinking are necessary to the development of professionals. Although cognate frameworks are part of a particular profession, there also may be different practical approaches to the application or use of that specific knowledge in that profession. These ways of thinking (and therefore knowing) are part of what Brookfield (1991) labels as reflective skepticism, Schon (1987) as artistry (or reflection-in-action), and King and Kitchener (1994) as reflective judgment.

Professional frames are acknowledged as scientific. The knowledge produced in and through professional fields is based on institutionalised practices and norms. If scientific knowledge is not used with critical thinking, then what Saul (1993) and many others have identified as technicism, managerialism, positivism, or scientism (i.e., ideologies) will prevail. Here the knowledge or application of that knowledge goes unquestioned. Here the theory/practice interface provides challenges to both educators and students.

The Interaction of Personal and Professional Perspectives

Each individual will experience the linkages and challenges between personal (particularistic) and professional perspectives in unique ways. For some it will be a subtle change, for others one demanding struggle. In either case, we are suggesting that students will come to their own praxis. That is, they will be reflective practitioners (Edwards, 1999).

Reflective practitioners have, first, to understand their own perspective, its ideas, beliefs, assumptions, values and norms. Second, in their professional activity they have to move beyond standardised thinking and acting. The world is a complex and messy place. Often the real, the practical situations of professional practice are such that the knowledge or applications obtained in education are inadequate or inappropriate. In their decision-making and actions, the practitioner, therefore, must go beyond the technical problem-solving obtained in professional education.

Rein (1983) makes the case for our theory-fact-value frameworks being central to our professional activity. Although we seek objectivity in our professional action, this is not possible in reality. The way we frame and name problems to be solved are based not only on our theory (episteme), but also on how we identify and integrate facts in the practical case at hand. The process of naming and framing is identified as problem setting. This activity is distinctive from problem solving, which is often used in the first instance. In turn, we may not be addressing the situation in any meaningful way. The argument here is that we should name and frame to set the problem, and then seek ways of solving the problem that move beyond standard approaches of the "case" (see also Lawson, 1984; Rein & Schön, 1977; Schön, 1980 for further discussion of this process).

Overall, our values influence the framing and naming process. The more we are able to get beyond technical problem solving and to use our framing and naming capabilities, the better able we will be to address complex, messy, and problematic
situations found in real life and in professional activity. This movement beyond biases (tunnel vision) toward useful and meaningful heuristics (Piattelli-Palmarini, 1994) is the goal sought here.

Schön (1987) summarises this. Here the practitioner cannot solve the problem in instrumental, known ways. They must think creatively, which Brookfield (1991) describes as “field-independent, lateral, holistic, divergent, syllabus-free” (p. 114). A central implication of this statement is that students be educated in what Ramsden (1992), describes as a deep (i.e., with an intention to understand) approach to learning. Here the demand for not acting upon immediate sensory information or through “recipe” actions is essential. Further, it demands the type of thinking de Bono (1978) labels lateral thinking, and Gleick (1996) as non-linear thinking if we are to move away from the vertical, dogmatically objective thought common in much current writing and practice in professional life. This also demands going beyond the monological approach espoused by Zeigler (1995).

We must help our students develop beyond standardised ways of thinking and acting. We must understand and challenge our perspectives to begin to make sound and ethical decisions as individuals and as professionals. By seeking the deeper frameworks of our thoughts, actions and different situations, we become critical thinkers (Ramsden, 1992). We need not accept solutions as they immediately appear to us. Also, as many theorists note, the heart of rationality is irrationality. This sets the challenge for us to deal with the theory-fact-value basis of our thought and action to avoid personal and professional conflict, and to be the most authentic person possible. How one thinks does not appear automatically. It is the result of experience, learning, and processes by which we become functional members of society.

**Epistemology: Knowledge and Thought**

Epistemology is the study of knowledge, of truth. The concern of this sub discipline is essentially “how do we know what we know.” Our knowledge is acquired empirically, rationally, and transrationally. We can use and abuse each of these realms of knowledge by carelessly or unconsciously accepting inappropriate assumptions. Heidegger’s indictment against the modern student is that we are too focused upon the calculative inquiry into truth at the expense of the meditative search. This penchant for positivism is of course at the expense of the contemplative and meditative searching that Socrates and Heidegger extol (cf. Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Ross, 1994). What we argue for in this paper is not the elimination of the empirical search for truth, but for the student’s ability to think critically and holistically.

A central feature of the human species is our incredible capacity for thought. With this capacity we have the power to develop and critique knowledge and apply
it in constantly changing and creative ways. We do not have to take what is given
or available, in material terms and in terms of ideas (thought), to survive. Humans
create and apply knowledge in multitudinous ways.

We have linked knowledge and thought here. This agrees with Paul’s (1990)
dialectic relationship between knowledge and thought:

We often talk of knowledge as though it could be divorced from thinking, as
though it could be gathered up by one person and given to another in the form of
a collection of sentences. When we talk in this way we forget that knowledge, by
its very nature, depends on thought. Knowledge is produced by thought, analyzed
by thought, comprehended by thought, organized, evaluated, maintained, and
transformed by thought. Knowledge exists, properly speaking, only in minds that
have comprehended and justified it through thought. (p. 46)

When we develop knowledge/thought structures (epistemes) we develop
ideologies. It is these frameworks of ideas that guide our thinking. Further, we
acknowledge that students come for education with a well-developed cognitive
structure. That is, each has a perspective, tacit knowledge, cognitive structure,
world-view, or narrative identity. These simply are different ways of labelling our
basic, or at least initial, knowledge framework.

We obtain these frameworks from many different parts of our lived social
experience. Ideologies are part of our social and cultural world. Further, ideology
often operates in ways that are not always part of our conscious thought. As Marchak
(1981) wrote:

social reality doesn’t appear to us directly. It is revealed to our understanding
through a screen of assumptions, beliefs, explanations, values, and unexamined
knowledge. Together, these elements of the screen comprise an ideology, and the
ideology directs our attention to some realities but not to others; interprets what
our senses transmit but in terms of what is already accepted as truth. (p.1)

In short, ideologies operate as perceptual filters that become part of our
perspective on the world. They are basic to what we see or do not see (or hear, smell,
feel, taste). These filters orient our senses to become aware of selected, different
observable elements of the world.

What, then, are the elements of what we also call frames, perspectives,
epistemes, or knowledge frameworks? Basic to these frames are beliefs, which
are a “statement[s] about reality that is accepted by an individual as true. A belief
differs from a value, in that while a value concerns what a person regards as good or
desirable, a belief is a statement of what is regarded as true and factual” (Theodorson
& Theodorson, 1969, pp. 28-29). Further, beliefs are based on a number of scientific
and non-scientific sources. Rather than simply using or focussing on beliefs, we often
base our thinking on values, or on learned combinations of beliefs and values.

Here the concept of value-referents is central to our individual perspectives.
Values are “general conceptions of the desirable goals, or ends, which people should strive to attain and criteria by which actions should be evaluated. They constitute standards against which people evaluate goals and actions” (Hagedorn, 1994, p. 66). Values are central to the formation of axiological frameworks, which are discussed in the next section.

Values are made real and active through norms. Norms are simply ways of behaving. People may hold the same values, but may not always follow the norms implied by those values. When values are assumed to be the basis of action and knowledge, we may act in ways that are incompatible or conflicting. Further, we encounter competing frames and appreciative (value) systems at different points in our lives. These competing frames add further thoughts and behaviours that appear contradictory and confusing (cf. Liedtka, 1989).

Here, then, we encounter difficulties with assumptions. We identify assumptions as “the seemingly self-evident rules about reality that we use to help us seek explanations, make judgments, or select various actions. They are the unquestioned givens that, to us, have the status of self-evident truths” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 44). Often we discuss assumptions under the term opinion. Opinions are the expression of attitudes. Attitudes are based upon the beliefs and values we hold. Assumptions then can be of two types, psychological and cultural.

Brookfield (1991) speaks of psychological assumptions, which are “inhibitory rules that are unconscious but that cause anxiety and guilt when we violate them” (p. 45), and of cultural assumptions, which “are embedded in the dominant cultural values of a society and are transmitted by social institutions. They inform our conduct in political, economic, occupational, and religious spheres” (p. 45). In other words, they form ideologies that become part of our cognitive structures. Both psychological and cultural assumptions are formed through socialisation and enculturation. They often remain unexamined and unquestioned.

We often do not question our own thinking. We operate with a set of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and values that we rarely question. In science and the professions we have as a key task the need to question the assumptions we hold. As part of our research and education we seek a deeper and broader understanding of the world around us and of professional activities within that world.

In particular, we do not often question the ideas and values built into knowledge structures and ideologies, and passed on to us by parents, peers, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, professors, administrators, and others. The world is pre-interpreted for us by those we encounter throughout life. It is these pre-interpretations that give sense and order to our world. Many forms of knowledge that have any scientific backing often go unquestioned and unchallenged in our society. Further, these are the ideas and values we receive from educators, coaches, sport administrators, and to some extent religious and political leaders, who seek validated knowledge from their expert group or groups (e.g., university scholars, a synod, “think tanks” of different ideological leanings, or many specialised [e.g., sport] bureaucracies).
Two ironies are present here. First, we fail to challenge received knowledge and value structures and, therefore often perpetuate, employ or espouse knowledge that limits or fails us in our attempts to operate in the world. Second, we reduce our own natural abilities to think. By this we mean that our innate abilities to perceive and to think about our observations is limited, rather than freed.

Strongly imposed ideas, beliefs, values, and meanings deny our capacity to think and to challenge those ideas, beliefs, values, and meanings. In particular, our ability to reason through common sense and intuitive interpretation is constrained by the imperative of scientific knowledge. We can accept the fact that our ideas cannot be as sound as individuals who study and write upon different subjects, but this is not the argument being made here. This leads us to believe that any thought other than that provided by science or other experts is weak, faulty, or incomplete. When a belief or value is imposed upon us and impacts on our ability to think, then we are constrained (see Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 for a parallel critique). Our ability to think is, in fact, truly unbounded.

Axiology: Values and Thought

Axiology is a division of philosophy that includes the study of values and ethics (Flew, 1979; Hodgkinson, 1983, 1996). It provides us with the theoretical basis for our understanding of why we behave the way we do and how we ought to behave. Where values appear to be more descriptive of our behaviour (i.e., are explicitly manifested by our behaviour), ethics are prescriptive. Surrounding these theoretical elements are the perceived realities which include an individual’s personal existence, the existence of others, and the structures in which he or she exists (i.e., societies and organisations). The means by which we acquire the knowledge or perception of these realities are driven by our epistemological orientation. Therefore, an individual will behave in a particular manner as a function of the knowledge acquired and the kind of information that is accepted and appropriated. One can argue that axiology and epistemology are manifested in our abilities to think critically as well as behave ethically (i.e., praxis). If one is unaware of their personal ontological orientation and axiological grounding, and if knowledge is restricted to a particular realm (e.g., empiricism), then ethical conduct is at the whim of external sources and becomes the antithesis of authenticity and critical thinking.

The relevance of the discussion presented thus far to ethics in sport administration is significant. Administrative theory generally, and sport administration specifically, have been traditionally cast as, at best, amoral. Sport administration has been professionalised and popularised as a value neutral or value free science by many of the theorists and practitioners in the form of neo-Taylorism, neo-Weberianism, and neo-behaviourism (all within the new mantra of managerialism) with their implicit and explicit assumptions of efficiency, effectiveness, and
production of organisational members, volunteers, and, most of all, athletes. This sport administration Zeitgeist is obvious as one reviews the content of the field’s literature. This is also the project of critical social science and critical management studies. With the latter, the relations and dynamics of power and domination are reduced from view or not challenged at all.

As a consequence of the scientific and behavioural orientation to the profession, ethics has played a minimal role as an educative or practical component of the sport administrator’s repertoire (see Malloy, Prapavessis, & Zakus, 1994). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that in an era when managerial behaviour is becoming more and more reactively subjected to ethical critique by sport organisation members, volunteers, athletes, government, and the public, the administrator is unable to accommodate ethical discourse because he or she lacks the tools of critical and ethical thought and analysis. Where would this person have received these tools? Certainly not from their university education, as at least two studies have demonstrated (Malloy, 1992; Malloy, Prapavessis, & Zakus, 1994) and a cursory examination of current sport management curricula suggest.

A recent and predictable approach to overcome the inherent danger of ethical ignorance is the need for a formalised code of ethics. Presumably, if a code is provided to the managers and members, they will follow it. This approach endorses the traditional view of organisational control, as members are herded toward behaviour with no attempt to provide any cognitive moral growth. When faced with a dilemma, they need only to find the appropriate rule and the resolution emerges. This strategy is perhaps necessary, if the managers and members are incapable of critical thought and thus unable to provide comprehensive ethical analysis.

Problems, however, are rarely matched with a priori rules and resolutions and are, as a result, sterile and incomplete. This argument demands that the student and practitioner’s ability to think critically is fundamental for their ability to recognise and respond to the unavoidable array of ethical dilemmas (obvious and latent) that will be faced throughout their career. This, in turn, brings us back to values and the need for a value clarification exercise.

Ethics assists us in determining what we ought to do; values, on the other hand, provide us with the background to understand why we do what we do. While many definitions of values exist, one of the most concise and powerful is the following: “A value is a concept of the desirable with a motivating force” (Hodgkinson, 1983, p.36). This definition implies that behaviour is a direct result of what we value because a value has a “motivating force.” This obviously applies to those values that we actually hold as opposed to ones that we say we hold or would like to hold (espouse) but then fail to act upon them by making them theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1980).

Values that we actually hold are often termed, “core values,” as opposed to intended, adopted, and weak values (England, Dhingra, & Agarwal, 1974). Core values are the values that lead to action regardless of the circumstance. Intended
values are those that we intend to hold, yet these may be influenced by external variables. For example, I may intend to walk to work everyday, however, when it is -36°C outside my home, I will drive my car. Adopted values are those that the individual adopts as a function of the pressure to conform to a societal or organisational norm. They are adopted but not necessarily internalised (i.e., they are not core values). I may say I hold a particular value and I may even act on this value, however, outside the group or organisation I will not base my behaviour on this particular value.

Finally weak values are those that I say I value, yet these values never translate into action. For example, a sport administrator may suggest that he or she values grass root sport programming; yet when budgets are developed, he or she directs the majority of funding to elite programmes. Therefore, that which is truly valued, which has a motivating force, is the elite and not the developmental programme. In this example, elite sport could be a core, intended, or adopted value; developmental sport is a weak value.

Christopher Hodgkinson (1983) provides another way to assess our value orientation. He suggests that there are four levels of valuing; each level is progressively more complex and philosophically defendable. The most basic rationale for valuing is termed preference (Type IV). Here a value is held because the individual likes it. It is sub-rational and self-serving. The next level is consensus (Type III). This rationale is based upon the will of the group. Hodgkinson argues that at this level the individual is more involved cognitively in the decision to value; however, it is in response to the general preference of the crowd. The third level in the hierarchy fully employs one’s cognitive complexity, as the value is held as a result of the consequences it generates (Type II). The thought process is similar to the scientific model in which hypotheses are tested and rigorous logic and analysis takes place. The highest level of valuation is based upon universal principles that are individually developed (Type I). One holds values at the principled level through having an authentic commitment to a self-chosen duty. For example, the rationale for valuing water may be derived from each of these levels. I may value water because: I like the taste (preference), it is a popular drink (consensus), drinking water is healthy (consequence), and/or it may be perceived to be holy water (principle).

Ethics and values are tied together intimately. If what I ought to do is a core value, then presumably I will do it. If it is an intended or adopted value then I may do it. If I know what I ought to do, and this duty is a weak value, I probably won’t do it. For example, if I know that ethically I should not play an injured athlete, yet I hold this as a weak value and winning as a core, intended, or adopted value, and the ethical treatment of athletes as a weak value, then I will play injured athletes. The point to be made from this discussion is that in order for the sport management student to develop knowledge of the authentic self, reflection upon what one values and how it is valued is critical. The student should reflect upon: What are his or her core values? What values are weakly held and why? What are their instrumental values? And, what terminal values do they lead toward?
Zakus and Malloy (1996) argued that professional education begins from the students’ current knowledge. That is, it sets out challenges to their current assumptions (i.e., knowledge structure) (cf. Daniel & Bergman-Drewe, 1998; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995). Laying new content, ideas, concepts, and theories over an unexplored and understood conceptual capacity is not likely to benefit either party.

This demands two different but integral starting points in our teaching. First, as Biggs (1996) noted,

learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting, and cumulatively constructing, their own knowledge, through both individual and social activity. . . . the learner brings an accumulation of assumptions, motives, intentions, and previous knowledge that envelopes every teaching/learning situation and determines the course and quality of the learning that may take place. (p. 348)

This aligns with the need for students to explore their knowledge and moral structures. It also points to the need to understand how the student does learn. Here again it is beyond this paper to explore this topic. Suffice it to say that students learn in different ways and that the pedagogical practices employed must consider these differences in disposition and approach (cf. Daniel & Bergman-Drewe, 1998; Entwistle, 1997; Kolb, 1985; Ramsden, 1992).

Whilst this topic is not addressed here, we must consider what Biggs (1996) identifies as alignment of objectives, learning, and assessment wherein educators need to “focus on the performative aspect of understanding: . . . [that] require students to interact thoughtfully with a novel task, to reflect on appropriate feedback, to search to see how they can improve” (p. 351); to simply show that they can act differently with content in unfamiliar contexts. But how does this best occur?

Reviewing the literature for this work disclosed a number of themes and circularities. The key issues identified had to do with: the degree of formality of critical thinking, the domains of critical thinking, and the educability of students in critical thinking. As many of the key thinkers are philosophers the debate ran to some length. Many discussions focussed on what deBono (1978) calls “vertical thinking” and Gleick (1996) calls, “linear thinking.” This was best exemplified in our area by the works of Zeigler (1994, 1995). Zeigler, while mentioning the broader area of thought in the “allied professions,” basically proposes an informal type of logic. That is, he suggests a lighter version of formal logic as the central aspect to be taught and used. In reality, this is a chimera of wider claims for critical thinking. But he is not alone in this aspect of the debate.

Agreement is made here that sport professionals need the skills to analyse, evaluate, and make effective arguments and judgments in thought and action. As Jones and Brown (1993, p. 72) note, “critical thinking is both a philosophical orientation toward thinking and a cognitive process characterized by reasoned
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judgment and reflective thinking." This is also evident in some of the literature cited below. However, as Zeigler frames this practice it is much more like a module on logic than on a way to enhance professional praxis. McBride (1992) limits his discussion to a substantive area of the broader profession and does not add to the literature in the broader field nor in sport management. It is argued simply that these approaches narrow and leave out much of what is valuable in critical thinking.

The second debate focuses on whether critical thinking is course specific or generalisable across fields. Here the debate focuses on the centrality of the liberal arts versus professional fields, and whether the substantive content of the courses are conducive to critical thinking. The perspective adopted here is that an underlying epistemology exists in the substantive material of our field, and that this must come out in our teaching. Further, and in contrast to much academic practice, critical thinking should be contained across the curriculum and not simply as a stand-alone first year subject.

Accepting that there is a substantive epistemology in sport management, the third main debate needs no further discussion as it separates individuals into have and have not categories in terms of their abilities to think critically. Both the content and the generalisability of critical thinking are conducive for incipient development of sport management professionals. If instructors do not teach, develop, and explore these skills in all students, then how can decisions be made about their abilities (which implies that instructors have the ability and are able to teach it to others)?

The various terms used to identify a type of thinking that is not narrow, non-reflective, or otherwise constrained is critical thinking (or one of its many labels). The usage here does not imply the narrow version of logical (i.e., deductive and inductive) thinking so often identified with this category of thought. As Brookfield (1991) notes, critical thinking "entails much more than the skills of logical analysis taught in so many college courses on critical thinking. It involves calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning" (p. 1) or, more simply, "critical thinking is a praxis of alternating analysis and action" (p. 22). It is identifying one’s authentic framework as a basis for building an authentic meaning perspective for action in the world.

This presents a much broader and deeper challenge to the individual. First, Brookfield’s (1991) description of this challenge must be noted. He wrote that thinking critically-reflecting on the assumptions underlying our and others’ ideas and actions, and contemplating alternative ways of thinking and living-is one of the important ways in which we become adults. When we think critically, we come to our judgments, choices, and decisions for ourselves, instead of letting others do this on our behalf. We refuse to relinquish the responsibility for making the choices that determine our individual and collective futures to those who presume to know what is in our own best interests. We become actively engaged in creating our personal and social worlds. (p. x)
This implies that instructors have completed their own work on their personal knowledge structures. It further urges them to look at how their own biographies have developed in terms of other significant persons (and in many different social locations) over their lives (cf. Mills, 1959). In other words, how have relatives, friends, teachers, other persons, coaches, and sport administrators affected their perspectives?

Furthermore, instructors must make critical thinking a central aspect of their educated perspective. Although most professional schools are structured around a curriculum that follows the “basic science, applied science, and technical skills of day-to-day practice” (Schön, 1987, p. 9) format, students must be encouraged not to wait until later in their education to begin the process of critical thinking and ethical decision making. Both types of thinking, in both personal and professional life, must be an ongoing activity of lived experience.

A number of suggestions have been offered in other papers (e.g., Fernandez-Balboa, 1995; Zakus & Malloy, 1996) toward such teaching practices. Certainly the critiques of lecturing point to difficulties with that approach. In reality, however, under economic rationalism and the managerial model of higher education, this is a predominant model. As Stunkel (1998) and McKeachie (1986) argue, this format can be employed for developing critical thinking, even though it is a less suitable teaching strategy. More often, strategies to teach critical thinking, such as those identified by Brigham (1993), require “teaching critical thinking skills requires participatory learning strategies. Teaching critical thinking requires a reduction of content. A reduction in content requires . . . educators to teach concepts and principles, not facts” (p. 54). Suffice it to say, it demands that the lecturer/instructor be attentive to differences in learning styles, and to the range of possible pedagogical strategies when seeking to develop critical, deep thinkers, and to then have the patience, risk-taking, and political strength to carry through such practices.

If we wish to develop professionals who operate with a form of critical skepticism, we must use “critically responsive teaching [that] aims to nurture in students a critically alert, questioning cast of mind” (Brookfield, 1990, p. 24). Clearly this demands such a spirit in ourselves as teachers, and also demands that we use a variety of teaching strategies to allow our students to do the same.

**Educational Practices to Achieve Critical and Ethical Thinking**

The focus above has been on the theoretical background and on the need for understanding the current position of sport management students. Sport management educators also need to be supported, as they are also “students” of critical thinking and are of undeniable importance in setting the stage for critical thinking. Many authors have argued that the needs of educators must be met before they are able to implement appropriate and effective teaching methods to foster critical thinking. Sport management practice requires creative, personalised solutions to unpredictable
circumstances. Strategies utilised by educators when conducting classes could greatly influence students’ thinking. Critical thinking is not developed through one lecture or one field experience. Instead, skill in thinking develops over time through varied experiences.

Various techniques are used to develop critical thinking, and sport management educators face many challenges when teaching this concept. Instructional methods to enhance critical thinking should include creative approaches to open students’ minds, broaden and augment their ways of thinking, and facilitate the process of developing critical thinking abilities. Drawing on the literature, the following section contains seven instructional methods to foster critical thinking abilities. The seven techniques are value audit, questioning, small group activities, role-play, debate, (which were utilised as instructional strategies in the classroom), case studies, and journaling in the clinical field.

Value Audit
Perhaps the most basic exercise to perform is the investigation of one’s own values. A value audit directs us to explore what we value and, equally important, why we value. The audit is a relatively simple exercise with profound implications as it makes the implicit drivers of behaviour explicit to the individual. In a classroom context, students might be asked to list five values that they hold in the context of being a sport administrator. This in itself is an interesting and revealing discussion; however, the second task is to provide a rationale for these values. As discussed earlier, one may hold a value on a variety of levels (Hodgkinson, 1983, 1996) and intensities (England, Dinghra, & Agarwal, 1974). Students, once having identified a set of administrative values should be encouraged to identify the rationale for holding each value. This then becomes an opportunity for discussion and debate.

Questioning
Questioning as an activity to develop critical thinking abilities is well supported in the literature (Elliott, 1996; Sellappah, Hussey, Blackmore, & McMurray, 1998). It is an old technique with an illustrious history. Socrates first used questioning to stimulate critical thinking some 2,400 years ago when he used this technique to spur his students to deeper levels of contemplation. Anderson (1961, cited in Daly, 1998) claimed “it is purposeful thinking about ideas and assumptions and the weighing of logical arguments against one another which assists in clarifying those ideas and positions” (p. 324).

Another approach towards higher-level thinking is the filtering of information by identifying key issues, exploring reasons, and identifying ambiguous words and assumptions (Browne & Keeley, 1986). Questioning can help students to learn and search for alternative explanations through promoting openness in inquiry to evaluate reasoning, identify value preferences, and judge the significance of various opinions to the situation at hand. King (1995) believed that the hallmark of a critical thinker
was an inquiring mind. These authors assert that good thinkers are good questioners, in that they question whatever they see, read, hear, or experience. Critical thinkers are challenging, analysing, searching for explanations and alternatives, and reflecting on relations between an experience and what they already know.

Good thinkers also frame questions in a manner such as, "What is the nature of this?" "What does this mean?" "Why is it happening?" "What if?" Chubinski (1996) and King (1995) emphasised that formulating such questions can stimulate creative skills to predict outcomes and create alternatives. Critical thinking could also be enhanced if sport management educators asked questions that encourage students to self-question. Educators can model the Socratic method and then have students use this method with each other. Readings from a variety of course texts would be suitable material to complete this exercise.

**Small Group Activity**

Another commonly used technique to foster critical thinking skill development is small group activity. Small group activity encourages student interaction and enables them to share their ideas and examine individual assumptions. Small groups are less threatening for students and promote comfort to formulate questions for which they may not have the answers. Small group activity promotes collaborative working with peers asking the questions and then answering each other’s questions, thereby generating an environment that promotes debate. When reconvening in a large group, students have the opportunity to compare points of view and interpretations and to “contrast their critical thinking styles with their peers” (Neill, Lachat, & Taylor-Panek, 1997, p. 31).

Students could be assigned different management roles within a hypothetical sport organisation for which they have to work through a particular issue or simulated annual meeting (such as preparing materials for a board meeting). Students could be assigned positions such as finance officer, marketing director, personnel manager and work through the process of preparing current statements on where the organisation is and where it might go, without giving them pre-set opinions or perspectives. In the large group follow-up, the thinking and decision-making techniques can be compared and used as the basis for analysing each student’s critical thinking ability.

**Debate**

The process of debate entails analysing, critiquing and constructing arguments – all of which are vital elements of critical thinking and the higher level skills required to participate in this activity. Doyle (1996) indicated that debate is an effective teaching method that develops the skill of argumentation. Debate is an experiential learning activity and is different from a discussion in that debate presupposes an established situation on an issue – a “pro” and “con” (or meditative vs. calculative) argument of a particular assertion or proposition to solution of a problem. In order to convince the
observers to accept or reject a given position, debaters provide reasoned arguments for and against an issue (Garrett, 1996).

Fuszard (1989) and Venetzian and Corrigan (1996) also support the value of debate as a teaching and learning strategy, indicating that debate requires diligent inquiry and critical thinking skills and offers students the opportunity to learn new content in an exciting way. Preparation for a debate requires students to thoroughly investigate and research issues and use reason, logic, and analysis when defining opinions about a problem. In the process of a debate, participants need to react spontaneously, readily calling upon their reasoning, logic, and judgement. In order to defend their positions, participants appreciate the need to review current literature to identify supporting facts and to procure research data so they can anticipate opposing arguments – the basis of critical thinking. When presenting a debate appropriately, participants can learn to differentiate between fact and inference, which will improve their cognitive skills, especially in analysing problems, and will therefore gain appreciation for the complexity of issues.

These skills are important for sport managers in their role as part of a multidisciplinary team. Team participation requires individuals to justify their opinions in light of different views and agendas. Experience with the skills developed through debate provides the “mechanism for the expression of opinions through persuasive arguments and prompt analytical rebuttals” (Garrett, 1996, p. 38). There are a number of contentious issues in sport management that can be set up as debate topics. One might be on the role of managerialism in community sport organisations, the use of performance enhancing substances and practices by youth and adult athletes, or the role of boards in governing sport bodies. These can be set up as individually-based debates or established through small group arrangements.

**Role-Play**

Another form of participatory learning that promotes critical thinking is that of role-play, as it involves activities that simulate scenarios of real-life situations and allows students to place themselves into circumstances they have not previously experienced. Students have an opportunity to become actively engaged while in a non-threatening environment to promote critical thinking abilities (Porter Ladousse, 1988).

Through the power of role-play, people can be put into circumstances that conflict with their normal lifestyle and choices, hence providing opportunities to appreciate alternative views and opinions on a first hand basis in a non-threatening environment (Chubinski, 1996). Fuszard (1989) described role-play as an effective means for developing decision-making and problem-solving abilities. The problem-solving process (identification of the problem, data collection and evaluation of potential outcomes, exploration of alternatives and approaching decisions to be implemented) can be analysed within the context of a role-play situation. The post-play discussion gives an opportunity for faculty to provide analysis and formation of new ideas and strategies.
Case Studies
A form of role-playing is the use of case studies that simulate actual organisational dilemmas. This is a popular and widely-used format. There are many styles of case study analysis; however, the model suggested by Malloy et al. (2003) offers an alternative to standard formats in that it is more holistic (i.e., brings more internal and external variables to the analysis), and involves the students in critical thinking (Jones & Sheridan, 1999). We suggest that case studies can be an effective tool, not only through analysis of previously written cases, but also through the experience of students writing their own case studies, to which peers then provide a critical analysis and problem resolution.

Reflective Journaling
One effective technique for instructing students to think critically is having each student keep a clinical journal. Hancock (1999) stated that “reflective practice learning journals have become a valued teaching and learning tool in nursing education” (p. 37). Journaling can prove to be a valuable medium to assist sport management educators to teach through questioning and to foster the development of an inquiring mind. It can also help students reflect on changes in their critical thinking abilities at the beginning and at the end of a work experience course. Students can reflect their practical experience through the act of writing. In writing, students can “think aloud” objectively and transfer their thoughts and perceptions onto paper, carefully documenting subjective and objective observations, scrutinising alternatives, exploring, critiquing their ideas, and analysing and evaluating experiences.

In summing up, the preceding section suggests that the practice of sport management requires that sport managers continuously adapt and develop their knowledge and skills. The rapidity of change means that it is no longer sufficient to rely on knowledge gained in school to effectively accommodate changing demands. Sport management educators today are confronted with the challenge to develop critical thinking skills in their sport management courses. They are also aware of the need for teaching students the skills for analysis, reasoning, evaluating, and developing their own opinions. To enable students to achieve these skills, sport management educators are instrumental in providing guidance, assistance, role modelling, and instructional methods required in promoting critical thinking skills. Educators must also reflect on their own critical thinking and have developed their own value frameworks, moral stances, and ethical standards to be a good guide for their students.

In contemplating instructional methods, it is clear that the process of questioning is a common theme embedded throughout all the strategies. Questions that initiate thinking urge students to make inferences and comparisons, solve problems, construct hypotheses, and evaluate information, hence developing high-level skills. As an important element in critical thinking, questioning should be incorporated into all teaching techniques to make learning more effective in developing students’ inquiring minds.
Conclusions

The main function of this paper has been to examine ways that sport management educators can develop their students' abilities to link thought and action. Another purpose was to provide a framework that challenges assumptions held as part of current knowledge structures (i.e., to become critical thinkers). Alvesson and Deetz (2000) note that:

> all social research [studies] take place out of a background set of ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions. These provide taken-for-granted understandings of the world and the people in it, preferred methods for discovering what is true or worth knowing, and basic moral and aesthetic judgments about appropriate conduct and quality of life. (p. 23)

Whether discussing the basic elements of critical thinking as we do here, or discussing critical social science, critical management studies, or critical management research, the same points hold. Praxis is determined not only by critical thinking, but by purposeful action.

An argument for a two-staged, interrelated process in this development was made. The first stage focuses on reflective thinking. The process of thinking, knowing, and acting toward developing reflective thinking abilities begins when students start with an understanding of themselves, their thought processes, and their life experiences via self-reflection. Through objectively reflecting on their subjective ability to think, know and act, the nascent sport manager is able to be reflexive. That is, the world is viewed more clearly and as less encumbered than before. From this point, changes in the objective way knowledge is used to perceive and to then act in the world begins. They become authentic change agents through the capacity to act reflexively.

In the social sciences this is also associated with the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation. Here is the idea that all humans receive and act in a pre-interpreted world. There are knowledge structures of different strengths, both in content and power, available and given to them in different ways by different persons throughout life. To be reflexive demands that they begin to understand the ideas and values behind particular interpretations and then begin to act in ways that permits them to act upon and change the world.

Sport management professionals must interpret what others have already interpreted both in thought and action. In short, they must approach their social roles in a way that allows them to go beyond accepting things as they immediately appear. They must move to a position where they examine matters in a critical way. By delving below the surface of immediate impressions they can include the deeper, hidden processes occurring in the situation encountered.

This will involve risk, which is part of managerial life and should be worth the effort. Brookfield (1991) captured such possibilities in the following:
Taking the risk to think critically, and to realise in our actions the insights we gain through this, is one of the most powerful activities of adult life. The reason we persist in doing this, even when it seems to produce only frustration, perplexity, and anxiety, is the rewards it produces. As critical thinkers we are engaged in a continual process of creating and re-creating our person, work, and political lives. We do not take our identities as settled; rather, we are aware of the scope for development in all areas of life. We see the future as open to our influence. We regard the world as changeable through our own individual actions and through collective action in concert with others who share our commitment to broader political and social changes. We do not accept the idea that because things are the way they are now, they must always be this way. And we do not think that we (or anyone else) have the ultimate answer to life’s ambiguities and problems. But we do have confidence in knowing that those things in which we believe, and the actions we take arising out of these beliefs, spring from a process of careful analysis and testing against reality—in other words, from critical thinking. (p. 254)

The second concomitant process is praxis. This second, higher stage of thinking goes beyond the objective/subjective unity of reflexive thinking toward individuals applying theory to practice. Once students have started to become reflexive thinkers, they can extend their knowledge through different educational experiences and then use this higher level of knowledge in their every day and professional activities. Here we note that context is important as the professional practice of sport managers (and their critical sensibilities) is necessarily contextually informed and variable in both synchronic and diachronic senses. Once they have become authentic thinkers, application of higher levels of theoretical knowledge to practical and professional life activities is possible. Both reflective knowledge and praxis will lead them toward being authentic, ethical, and critical thinkers who can handle any challenging, decision-making situation with acumen.

Toward this end, sport management educators must have notions of student learning styles, capabilities, and orientations. Tying learning and assessment into coherent critical thinking capabilities and experiences will assist in the development of methods and teaching practices. The challenge is therefore demanding. It asks educators to understand what it is they are trying to achieve and how that can best be achieved. As Frisby (2005) notes, “embracing CSS and exposing students, future researchers, and managers to it opens up a new world that, up to this point, has been inadequately explored” (p. 9). In sum, it demands that we work toward Brookfield’s (1990) “critically responsive teaching.”
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