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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to identify the competencies of Basketball coaches in Greece. The current study is based on previous work done by Rodrigues et al, (11), and Tripolitsioti et al, (14,17), who measured competencies both in Portuguese basketball coaches and directors of indoor sport facilities in Greece. Two hundred and forty five basketball coaches of three Greek Divisions (first, second and third) participated in the study and completed the scale. Exploratory factor analysis revealed 5 factors consisting of 21 competency statements: Sport science/practice (6 items), communication/leadership (5 items), first aid/risk management (2 items), computer skills (4 items), and programming 4 items). Moreover, the results demonstrated that first aid and training skills were the top rated competencies, following by management and computer skills, while facility & event management were the low rated competencies. These results validate that the successful basketball coaches didn't only have training competencies, but management, computer skills, first aid, communication, facility management and event management.

KEY WORDS: *Competencies; coaches; basketball.*

INTRODUCTION

After the National basketball team of our country won the European championship in 1987, there was a sharp engagement in the sport. Today, in Greece basketball is second in popularity after football, where it has employed in all categories about 400 coaches (13).

The profession of basketball coaching is difficult and requires many skills to be acquired.

The coach should have knowledge of the sport (rules and technical), economic and administrative (2, 7). He should also be able to interact effectively through interpersonal relationships with athletes, colleagues and all those involved in sports organizations, even with those who follow their team's matches (8).

Even the coaches must have leadership skills to get quick and accurate decisions, which remain valid and to make reasonable use of their power to bring athletes and their teams to better performance (10).

Several studies over the last decade are trying to analyze the knowledge, skills that coaches are required to have and that will allow them to plan, organize, administer and manage a team (1, 9).

No study was found in the literature to explore the competencies required to be available to basketball coaches in Greece.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to identify the competencies that the basketball coaches need to have in order to manage effectively a basketball team.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the Department of Sport Management, University of Peloponnese, that is located in Sparta, Lakonia, Greece. The research started at the beginning of 2010 and finished at the end of 2010.

The subjects who participated in this study were 245 Basketball coaches randomly chosen from the Attica region. All participants were provided with a packet of information which included the questionnaire, a self-addressed envelope and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. Answers could be sent by post or e-mail. A follow up letter was sent to those who did not respond within 15 days and data collection terminated one month after the initial mailing. After two follow-ups, 245 responses were received, a response rate of 62 %.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was constructed with procedures similar to related studies (11, 14, 17): a) a review of related literature, b) informal interviews with basketball coaches, c) a panel of experts, and d) field testing of the questionnaire.

1) Following a critical review of the literature on measures of competencies, a pool of 12 items was developed. These items were judged to cover the inmates' attitudes dimensions.

2) Five informal interviews with basketball coaches were conducted. The purpose of these interviews was to generate items specifically related to coaches. Six were added, based on these interviews. These items were related to coach education in Greek. These procedures resulted in the development of a pool of 33 items.

3) The above pool was subjected to a critical analysis by three specialists, representing prominent academics in sport management, sociology and research methods from Greece. They were asked to rate the items of coaches and the clarity of the statements. This procedure reduced the number of items to 25. The final instrument was reviewed by a Greek literature teacher in order to ensure comprehension and appropriate language (4, 12).

Before distributing the questionnaires to the coaches a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the content and construct validity of the questionnaire. Basketball coaches were asked to rate the importance they placed on the competencies in a five-point Likert style scale: very unimportant (1), unimportant (2), unsure or undecided (3), important (4), very important.

STATISTICS

The data collected from basketball coaches were entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 software and later converted to the SPSS 17.0 statistical package for data analysis. The descriptive statistics of means, standard deviations, frequency rankings of the competency statements and percentages were used to obtain information from the data analysis. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency reliability of the whole scale and between items on each factor. Factor analysis was conducted to determine the number of factors in the scale (4, 12). For the factor 3, that was consisted by two items each, it used the Pearson correlation, which confirmed high significant correlation.

RESULTS

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was carried out in order to group the twenty five competency statements on the questionnaire. Principal Component Analysis followed by varimax rotation was used to extract the factors. The Cronbach-alpha of

the questionnaire was 0.86, while the sub-scales reliabilities for the five factors ranged from 0.69 to 0.76.

The competency items «demonstrates an understanding of specific inherent risks of sport activity», «applies theories of cooperative and competitive play», «demonstrates an understanding of the sociological and psychological aspects of sport» and «demonstrates adequate sport skills», were eliminated during the process of finding the best solution for the analysis, because the factor loading was under 0.40. Five factors were extracted after analysis that explained the 55.76 of total variance of variables. The factors were: (a) factor 1, «sport science/practice», (b) factor 2, «communication/leadership», (c) factor 3, «first aid/risk management», (d) factor 4, «computer skills», and (e) factor 5, «programming». The data is illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. *Factors extracted from the principal component analysis with varimax rotation*

A/A	Factors	Number of items	Cronbach a	Eigen values	% of variance	Cumulative (%)
1	Sport science/practice	6	0.76	5.832	26.511	26.511
2	Communication/ leadership	5	0.75	2.138	9.717	36.228
3	First aid/risk management	2	< 0.01*	1.779	8.086	44.314
4	Computer skills	4	0.70	1.320	6.002	50.316
5	Programming	4	0.69	1.198	5.447	55.762

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the competencies of basketball coaches in Greece. We found five factors that consisted of 21 items. These are the sport science/practice factor, communication/leadership., first aid/risk management, programming and computer skills.

The science/practice factor consisted of the items «demonstrates an understanding of human limitations in sport», «develops physical fitness programs», «demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between health and recreational sport», «identifies aggression pattern of basketball players», «organizing and conducting practice sessions», and «doing annual planning».

These results are in line with studies that investigated the competencies needed by professional managers in different sport settings. For example Koustelios (6), developed a scale to measure the competencies needed to administer sport and fitness clubs in Greece. Two hundred and two sport and fitness club directors from three national club sport federations participated in his study. After results analysis Koustelios found that the fifteen competency items consisted of four factors: human recourse management (5 items), marketing and communication (4 items), knowledge of sport (3 items), and financial management (3 items). Even though the study was investigated in administration, the results showed that the knowledge of sport was crucial to manage sport and fitness clubs.

Similar were the results of Kim (5), who investigated the competencies needed by the managers of sport centers in the Republic of Korea. The scale that consisted of 59 items, distributed to the top, midlevel, and entry levels of sport administrators. The order to rate the importance of the competencies was to their jobs. The results showed that the top competency was the understanding of the nature of the sport. He concluded that sport administrators at different levels and different sizes of organizations in the Republic of Korea rated the competencies differently.

Horch and Schutte (3), in another study, studied the competencies of sports administrators in German sport federations and fitness clubs. They analyzed their data by factor analysis and identified five groups of activities and seven groups of competencies. The interviewees rated as important the items of advertising, interpersonal communication, public relations and techniques of personal management. Most of the administrators emphasized management functions and areas of event management, such as budgeting, financing and sponsorship. The evaluation of the competencies showed clear differences from job to job. Similar are the results of Muntakis et al, (9), Trpolitsioti et al, (2009a; 2009b) and Tripolitsioti (18).

Although, in the current literature there are many studies in the area of job competencies, in basketball the studies are lacking. Rodrigues et al (11), investigated the competencies in 178 Portuguese basketball coaches, who answered in a 37 items scale. After analysis the factors were: a) practice; (b) competition; (c) management; (d) coach education; (e) personal and social. According to the results the high experienced coaches award greater importance and perceived themselves more competent in the items related to knowledge and professional competences than low experienced coaches.

The basketball coach in Greece has a variety of duties and roles. The coach should be the teacher, the parent, the friend and the leadership, that will strength the self-concept of the players and give to them the chance to win the games. So, the coach should have a lot of competencies, which are in relationship with the knowledge of the sport.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study confirmed that the successful basketball coaches in Greece, should have the core competences such as «demonstrates an understanding of human limitations in sport», «develops physical fitness programs», «demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between health and recreational sport», «identifies aggression pattern of basketball players», «organizing and conducting practice sessions» and «doing annual planning».

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