

Management competencies of sport club managers in the North-West Province, South Africa

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Abstract

The professionalization and commercialization of sport have created an increasing need for trained sports club managers globally and in South Africa. In the past, sports clubs in the country were run mainly by volunteers, but the new demands that require professionally educated, permanent staff mean that it is necessary to identify and describe the competencies required of sports club managers. This study compared the managerial competencies of sports club managers as they themselves perceived it with their managerial competencies as perceived by sports club coaches from selected sports codes in the North West Province. The data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire. A total of 63 respondents participated in this study out of a sample of 80, selected from different sporting codes. An independent t-test determined the difference between what sports club managers thought were the competencies required to manage a sports club and what the sports club coaches thought were the competencies necessary. From the 25 questions in the questionnaire, the results of 18 questions showed statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$), 15 showed moderate practical significant differences ($d \approx 0.5$) and 3 showed large practically significant differences ($d \approx 0.8$). From the results it can be concluded that the coaches of the sports clubs perceived their sports club managers not to be competent in performing their tasks as managers of the club.

Keywords: Sport clubs, managers, competencies, sport management.

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Introduction

Over the last 20 years sport has become more global, garnered more fans and presented opportunities for greater business development than ever before (Westerbeek, 2010). One element within sport that lies central to these developments is the management of sport. It already existed in ancient Greece when combat among gladiators or animals attracted crowds of spectators. According to Parkhouse (2005), Herod, King of Judaea, was honorary president of the eleventh-century ancient Olympics. A magnificent ceremony opened those Games, followed by athletic competition where thousands of spectators were entertained and, given the magnitude of such events. The growing and diversifying public interest in sport as well as the continuous growth and changes

associated with sport, demand greater professional competencies of sports managers in clubs and federations. These have, in turn, led to more stringent requirements for professionalism in the management of sport (Horch & Schutte, 2003).

There seems to be a continuous increase in sport management employment opportunities within various settings such as professional sport, tertiary sport and community-based recreation (Barcelona & Ross, 2004). The appointment of trained sport managers who frequently interact with stakeholders such as the sports clubs, athletes, parents and supporters, is regarded as one of the key portfolios in managing and marketing sport (Chelladurai & Ogasawara, 2003). In South Africa, Goslin (2007) argues that there is a serious inadequate understanding of the management competencies, skills, behaviour and attitudes required of sports managers to manage sport effectively.

The purpose of this study was to compare the management competencies of some sports club managers as they themselves perceive it, with that as perceived by some sports club coaches in the North West Province of South Africa.

Methodology

Research design

To reach the aim of this study, a quantitative research method was used in which the data were obtained by means of a structured questionnaire.

Participants

The target population comprised club-level sports managers and coaches randomly chosen from selected sports codes in the North West Province. A total of 80 questionnaires were issued (40 to sports club managers and 40 to sports club coaches) and 63 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 79%. Out of the 63 questionnaires that were returned, 60 questionnaires were selected; 30 from sports club managers and 30 from sports club coaches, as to ensure equal representation in the study. To prevent influence and discussion between manager and coach when completing the questionnaire, managers and coaches were chosen from different clubs to complete the questionnaire.

Measurement instrument

Two questionnaires were constructed; one for the sports club manager and one for the sports club coach. The self-designed questionnaires of Vosloo (2007) were adapted for the study. The structured questionnaires consist of closed-form scaled items chosen for their objectivity. Both questionnaires consisted of two

sections and were designed specifically to test the competency issues relevant to the study.

Section A of both questionnaires focused on demographic details. Section B of the questionnaire for sports club managers required the respondents to give their opinion about the importance of different management competencies to manage a sports club effectively. Section B of the questionnaire for sports club coaches required the respondents to give their opinion on the different management competencies of their sports club manager.

Research procedure

With the help of the North West Academy of Sport (NWSA), a list of nine priority sports federations in the North West Province was compiled. For inclusion, the nine sports codes had to have sports clubs within the North West Province that were affiliated to it; be part of the priority sports codes within the province and receive funding for club development from the provincial department; and be affiliated to the provincial Academy of Sport.

The sports club managers and coaches were contacted via telephone, fax or e-mail to request their participation in the study and to briefly explain the purpose of the research, topics to be covered and the expected time needed to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then distributed to all participants by e-mail and fax. After completion of the questionnaires, the participants e-mailed and faxed it back. All the participants were assured that their responses on the questionnaire would be handled as confidential and anonymously.

Data analysis

The Statistical Consultation Service of the North-West University was consulted in determining the statistical methods and procedures for the analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics of each variable were calculated followed by an independent *t*-test to determine the difference between what sports club managers perceived as the competencies needed to manage a sports club and what the coaches perceived to be the competencies that their managers should have. In the analyses of differences, the level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Finally, effect sizes (ES) were calculated to determine practical significance for all the variables which showed statistical significance ($p \leq 0.05$). Practical significance can be understood as a large enough difference to have an effect in practice (Ellis & Steyn, 2003). Effect sizes were expressed as Cohen's *d*-value and can be interpreted as follows: an ES of more or less than 0.8 is regarded as large practical significant; ES more or less than 0.5 is moderate; and ES more or less than 0.2 indicates a small practical significance (Field, 2005).

Results

The results are presented in two sections namely, the demographic profile and sports management competencies.

Section A: Demographic profile

The descriptive analysis (Table 1) indicates that 71.5% of males and 28.5% of females participated in the study, reflecting that more men are involved as sports club managers and coaches than women. Most of the respondents were between the age group of 35 and 44 (42%) followed by the 45 and 54 years age group (28%) and only 3% of the participants were older than 56 years. As far as the level of education is concerned the results in Table 1 indicate that 60% of the respondents were in possession of a University degree or higher degree, 18.5% were in possession of a diploma qualification, with only 3% having an education level below a matriculation certificate.

Table 1: Demographic profile of sports club managers and coaches participated in the survey

Attribute	Percentage managers	Percentage coaches	Total percentage
Gender			
Male	60%	83%	71.5%
Female	40%	17%	28.5%
Age			
19-24	7%	4%	5.5%
25-34	23%	20%	21.5%
35-44	34%	50%	42%
45-54	33%	23%	28%
56+	3%	3%	3%
Education			
Lower than grade 12	2%	4%	3%
Grade 12	11%	14%	12.5%
Post school certificate	5%	7%	6%
Diploma	20%	17%	18.5
University degree and higher	62%	58%	60%

Section B: Sports management competencies

Figure 1 shows the mean values between the coaches and the managers regarding the management competencies. For all 25 management competencies the mean values for the coaches were higher than the mean values of the managers.

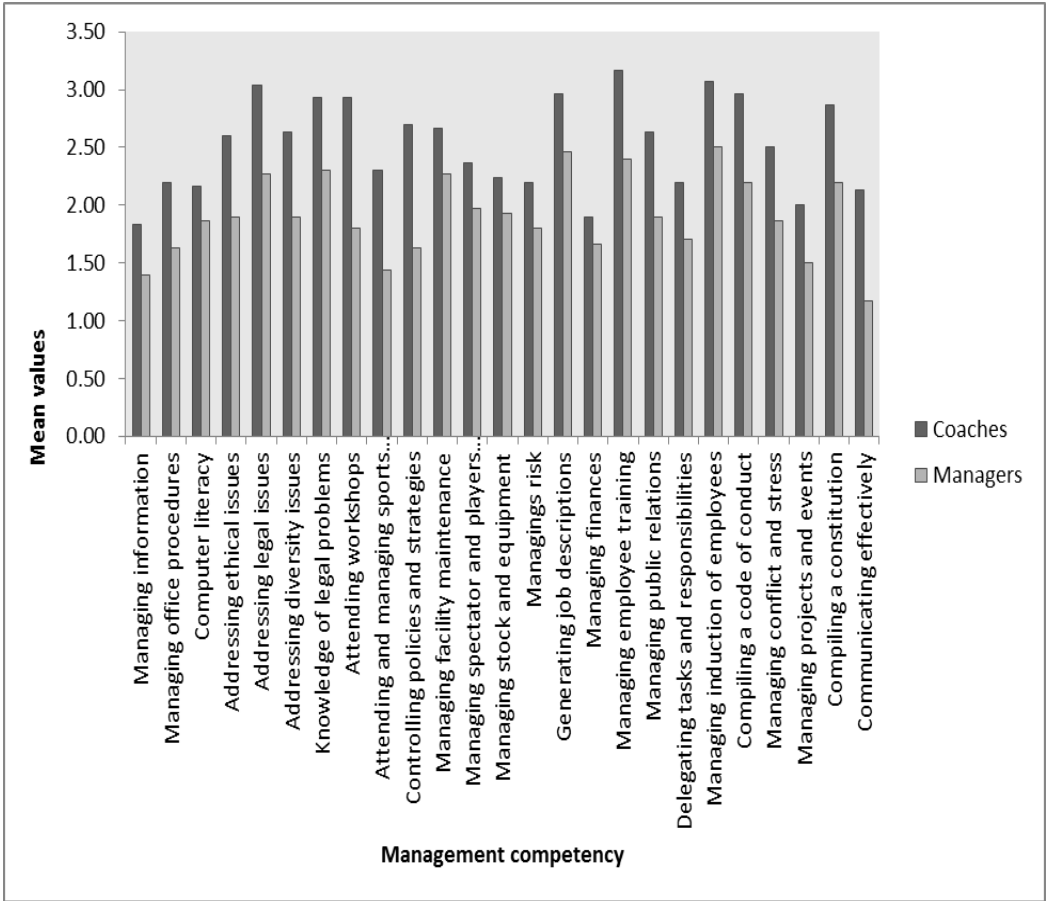


Figure 1: Mean values of the coaches and managers regarding the management competencies

Independent t-tests show that statistical significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) existed between the mean values in 18 of the 25 competency variables as indicated by the sports managers and the coaches (Table 2). Of the 18 statistical significant differences, 15 variables demonstrated moderate practical significant magnitude ($d \approx 0.5$) and 3 large practical significant magnitude ($d \approx 0.8$). No statistical or practical significant differences were found between the mean values of the management competencies related to computer literacy, managing the facility, managing spectator and players safety, managing stock and equipment, managing risks, generating job descriptions and managing finances.

Table 2: Statistical and practical significance of the difference between sport club manager and coaches perception of management competencies

Sport Management competency	Statistical significance (p-value)	Practical significance (Effect size: d-value)
Managing information	0.0139*	0.6**
Managing office procedures	0.0056*	0.67**
Addressing ethical issues	0.018*	0.55**
Addressing legal issues	0.0068*	0.68**
Addressing diversity issues	0.0069*	0.6**
Knowledge of legal problems	0.0274*	0.49**
Attending workshops	0.0007*	0.8 #
Attending and managing sports meetings	0.0047*	0.63**
Controlling policies and strategies	0.0005*	0.77**
Managing employee training	0.003*	0.78 #
Managing public relations	0.0088*	0.63**
Delegating tasks and responsibilities	0.0186*	0.59**
Managing induction of employees	0.0401*	0.51**
Compiling a code of conduct	0.013*	0.59**
Managing conflict and stress	0.0098*	0.61**
Managing projects and events	0.006*	0.63**
Compiling a constitution	0.0343*	0.52**
Communicate effectively	0*	0.96 #
Computer literacy	0.1755	0.32
Managing facility	0.1411	0.35
Managing spectator and players safety	0.1136	0.38
Managing stock and equipment	0.285	0.26
Managing risks	0.0528	0.47**
Generating job descriptions	0.0927	0.42
Managing finances	0.3314	0.2

* Statistically significant differences: $p \leq 0.05$; **Moderate practical significance: $d = \text{more or less } 0.5$; # Large practical significance: $d = \text{more or less } 0.8$

Discussion

Comparing all 25 variables as a whole, it can be inferred that a true difference exists in how the sports club managers perceived their own levels of competence and how the sports club coaches perceive them. Based on the results of previous studies (Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; Fielding *et al.*, 1991; Horch & Schutte, 2003; Koustelios, 2003) it can be stated that a sports club manager must have knowledge about the specific sport as well as communication skills in the area of public relations. From a business perspective, administration, finances and marketing of the sport are regarded as important competencies. In relation to the competencies Pedersen *et al.* (2011) have developed competency sectors for sports club managers which provide an overview of the sports industry expectations. The core competency sector includes competencies such as marketing and sales, correspondence, public speaking, community relations and recordkeeping. Attached to the core sector, Pedersen *et al.* (2011) has added two sectors, organisation management and communication management.

Organisation management include competencies such as budgeting, managing personnel, managing facilities, controlling and directing; communication management include competencies such as writing, media relations, advertising and fund-raising.

The focus of these research findings was the perceived differences in competencies between two of the main stakeholders in affiliated sports clubs. In this regard the obvious gap was between managers' perceived competencies of themselves and that of coaches on their assessment of sports club managers. The findings yielded 18 statistical significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$), 15 practical significant differences of moderate magnitude and 3 practical significant differences of large magnitude, which means that the coaches of the sports clubs perceived the sports club managers not to be competent in performing their tasks as managers of the club.

Recommendations

The tasks and roles of a sports club manager should be made clear by means of discussions with other partners, members and stakeholders of the club. A detailed task structure should clearly set out the duties, responsibilities and competencies needed to perform the tasks to the required standard. For the effective implementation of the roles, tasks and responsibilities of the sports club manager, effective communication should be taking place between the coaches and managers of the clubs as to clearly define the related duties and needs to enable the development of the club and players effectively.

Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrate that the competencies of sports club managers need urgent attention, since some of the required competencies were negatively perceived by the coaches of the clubs involved.

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