

Professional competencies in tennis coaching

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ITF Coaching and Sport Science Review 2017; 71 (25): 3 - 5

ABSTRACT

In issue 70, we published an article showing the most valued professional knowledge by Brazilian tennis coaches. Based on those findings, now we present the main competencies required for the professional intervention in tennis coaching. We expect this information can contribute to the improvement of coach education programs, focused on competency-based approaches.

Key words: Professional Competencies, Coaching, Tennis.

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Article received: 27 Sep 2016

Article accepted: 08 Feb 2017

INTRODUCTION

A shift from a content-based to a competency-based approach has been raising discussions in coach education research in different countries (Fraayenhoven, 2011, Milistetd, 2015). Knowing the range of competencies regarding the coaching activity in a specific context, might contribute to coach education programs by enhancing strategies to deal with the real needs of sports coaches.

Considering the divergences regarding competency definition, we assumed in this study the Kirschner et al. (1997) conceptualization: “the ability to make satisfactory and effective decisions in a specific setting or situation”. For these authors, the effective decisions are associated with the knowledge, skills, situation, self-confidence, and personal values. Concerning the coaching activity, the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE, 2013) describes six primary functions of sport coaches, in which sport coaches should dominate interrelated competencies: (a) Set the vision and strategy; (b) Shape the environment; (c) Build relationships; (d) Conduct practices and prepare for and manage competitions; (e) Read and react to the field; (f) Learn and reflect.

Egerland, et al. (2009a, 2009b) and Egerland et al. (2013) analyzed the importance attributed by coaches from different sports for professional competencies. The results demonstrated that the most valued competencies for coaches were planning and management and communication and integration. The professional actualization and reflection competencies were less valued by sports coaches. In a study which evaluates only tennis coaches from several countries, Campos (2015) described that the importance attributed for professional competencies varies according context and coaching domain. In summary, the tennis coaches highly valued the professional development, communication, and planning competencies.

Considering the influence of context and the coaches need to demonstrate competencies in specific areas, the purpose of this study was to describe the Brazilian tennis coaches' perceptions and the importance attributed for professional competencies.



METHODS

Participants

The participants of this study were 73 tennis coaches (32.9 ± 9 years old) from Parana State, south Brazil. The coaches' characteristics were: 93.2% male; 57.5% had more than 5 years of coaching experience; 49.4% had at least a degree in Physical Education; 79% participated in any kind of continuing education program offered by the Brazilian Tennis Confederation.

Instruments

The instruments used for data collection included: a sociodemographic questionnaire and the Self-Perception Competencies Scale (SPCS) for Sport Coaches, validated by Egerland (2009) to the Brazilian version. The Professional Competencies dimension of scale consists of 32 items, belonging to four categories: Planning and Sports Management; Evaluation; Communication and Integration; and Reflection and Professional Development. The SPCS is answered on a five-point Likert scale, where the coaches report the degree of mastery (1 = not dominate and 5 = dominate very well), and the importance attributed (1 = no important and 5 = very import).

Data analysis

Data was collected manually in 2015 during the Parana state tennis coaches meeting in 3 different regions. Descriptive statistics (average, standard variation, frequency) were performed through the software Microsoft Excel 2010.



RESULTS

Professional Competencies	Self-Perception		Attributed Importance	
	Av.	SD	Av.	SD
Sports Planning and Management – I'm able to...				
Plan and execute sports training programs	3.39	0.92	4.26	0.89
Select the most appropriate progressions, methods and coaching strategies	3.67	0.73	4.24	0.76
Coordinate technical teams	3.41	1.11	3.93	1.01
Organize and plan sports activities	3.56	0.95	4.31	0.74
TOTAL	3.51	0.93	4.19	0.85
Evaluation – I'm able to...				
Evaluate the differences in biological maturation of athletes	3.52	0.82	4.16	0.82
Establish parameters and criteria for the evaluation of sports performance and its evolution	3.44	0.95	4.25	0.86
Evaluate sports training programs	3.22	1.03	4.26	0.89
TOTAL	3.39	0.93	4.22	0.85
Communication and Integration – I'm able to...				
Communicating with athletes, individually and in groups	4.33	0.73	4.26	0.83
Provide first aid	3.07	1.05	4.03	1.01
Promote the integration of athletes in difficulties	3.55	0.92	4.22	0.70
Promote the integration of athletes from ethnic minorities	3.72	0.90	4.18	0.77
Transmit a rational, clear and concise information	3.67	0.86	4.31	0.76
TOTAL	3.67	0.89	4.20	0.82
Reflection and Professional Development – I'm able to...				
Adjust the professional performance based on investigative evidences and professional development	3.41	0.76	4.03	0.83
Develop research questions	3.44	1.03	3.63	0.97
Cooperate for coaches' development	3.53	1.05	4.21	0.76
Analyze professional needs and design training programs for coaches	3.23	0.91	3.96	0.87
TOTAL	3.40	0.94	3.96	0.86

Table 1 – Self-perception and importance attributed for professional competencies.

According to Table 1 and in line with results from Egerland et al. (2013), the authors have verified that the Brazilian coaches demonstrated the highest values of self-perception related to the following competencies: Communication and Integration (3.67 ± 0.89), and Sports Planning and Management (3.51 ± 0.93). As reported by Egerland et al. (2009a), the values of importance attributed for all competencies evaluated were higher than self-perception scores,



mainly the Evaluation (4.22 ± 0.85), Communication / Integration (4.20 ± 0.82), and Planning / Sports Management (4.19 ± 0.85). Considering the findings in Campos (2015), all the competencies had similar coaches' evaluation scores except for Professional Development. These results suggest that the Communication and Planning competencies play a central role for tennis coaching.

The Reflection and Professional development competencies, corresponding to learn and reflect - ICCE's (2013) functional area, received the lowest attribution of importance from the participants. Considering the determinant role of reflective processes along the coaches' career Trudel et al., (2016), this internal learning situation should be incorporate at the coaches routine Trudel et al., (2013).



CONCLUSION

The results indicated that the competencies Evaluation, Communication and Integration, and Sports Planning and Management were highly valued by the participants. Similarly, the competencies Communication and Planning were also perceived as very important by tennis coaches in literature by Campos (2015). These findings claim attention to these competencies, in which they can be recognized as a common and fundamental points for tennis coaching.

Reflection showed lower scores compared to the other competencies in reference to self-perception, as well as the importance attributed. The authors suggest that sports administrators pay attention to this competence as it can be seen as being pivotal to coaches' continuing professional development. In order to contribute to the modification of this scenario, it is necessary to provide opportunities for coaches to engage in reflection activities and to improve competency-based strategies in coach education programs.

Note: The authors are grateful to the coaches' participation and appreciate the support from the Parana Tennis Federation on development of this study.

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