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IMPORTANCE AWARDED TO KNOWLEDGE FOR COACHING AND SELF-PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCE MANIFESTED BY PORTUGUESE BASKETBALL COACHES

João Rodrigues, Rúben Andrade, Amândio Graça, Isabel Mesquita

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at analysing the importance assigned to different areas of knowledge for coaching and the perception of professional competence of Portuguese basketball coaches. Data gathering was conducted through a questionnaire developed by Mesquita et al. (in press), consisting of 37 items covering the categories of knowledge and competences related to: (a) Practice; (b) Competition; (c) Management; (d) Coach Education; (e) Personal and Social. The sample of this study is composed of 178 Portuguese basketball coaches. The results show that high experienced coaches award greater importance and perceived themselves more competent in the items related to knowledge and professional competences than low experienced coaches.

Amândio Graça. Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade do Porto. Rua Dr. Plácido, 91 – 4200.450 Porto, Portugal.

E-mail: agraca@fade.up.pt

Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade do Porto

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in research on coaching in the past few years. A particular focus of this research has been centred in the analysis of the coach's competences within the scope of professional practice. (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). It is well documented in the literature that coaches need to orchestrate a wide range of knowledge and competences in order to efficiently perform their professional activity, bearing in mind the multitude of roles and tasks they are expected to carry out (Lyle, 2002; Hagemann, Strauss & Büsch, 2008). Rosado and Mesquita (2008) highlight the utter importance of identifying a profile of competences and specific knowledge-base which are considered vital for the exercise of the coaching activity.

Several authors (Abraham et al., 2006; Demers et al., 2006) and institutional initiatives, like the Aligning a European Higher Education Structure In Sport Science (AEHESIS) project have tried to identify the core competences of the sports coaches, comprehending **planning, organizing, conducting and assessing** activities related to practice and competition. Demers et al. (2006) also stress the importance of the knowledge that supports the development of those competences in coaching certification programs. In addition, research has been reporting the influence of professional experience on the level of competences of the sports coaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Gould et al., 1990). It is therefore important to examine if coaching experience has also any impact on coaches' evaluation of coaching knowledge domains, as well as their own self-perception of competence. This paper aims at analysing the importance Portuguese basketball coaches assigned to different areas of knowledge for coaching and self-perception of professional competence in the areas related to

practice, competition, management, coach training, and personal and social functioning.

Method

Sample

The sample of this paper comprised 178 Basketball coaches, classified in three groups of professional experience, G1 - low experienced coaches (0 - 4 years of coaching experience: n=59); G2 - intermediate experienced coaches (5 - 9 years of coaching experience, n=58); and G3 - high experienced coaches (10 and above years of coaching experience, n=57)

Data collection

The questionnaire used for data collection was developed in the scope of a research project on development and evaluation of coach education programs (Mesquita, Graça, Rosado, n.d.). Content and construct validation of the questionnaire (Borges, 2009; Cunha, 2008) was based on the review of specific literature (Simão, 1998; Demers et al., 2006; Abraham et al., 2006; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007; Gould et al., 1990), on an assessment by a panel of experts, on a pilot study with 30 coaches, and on the study of its psychometric properties and factorial structure. The questionnaire consists of 37 items, using a five point Likert scale, and addresses categories of knowledge and competences related to: (a) Practice; (b) Competition; (c) Management; (d) coach education; and (e) Personal and Social.

Data analysis

The parametric test One-Way ANOVA (Variance Analysis) has been used to test mean differences among the 3 groups of coaching experience. Post-hoc comparisons used the Tukey test to identify significant differences between groups of coaching experience. The statistic level of confidence of 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$) has been adopted.

Results

As shown in table 1, the comparative analysis about the importance awarded to the professional competences, reveals that more experienced coaches (G3; > 10 years) assign more importance to competences associated to long term planning and knowledge about management of players' careers than less experienced coaches (G1; < 5 years).

High experienced coaches distinguish also from intermediate experience coaches (G2; 5 to 10 years), as they assign higher value to autonomous learning and to knowledge about content and strategies of delivering content. There is no difference between less experienced and intermediate experienced groups in the importance assigned to knowledge and competences for coaching.

Regarding the obtained results through the comparative analysis of coaches and their self-

perception of competence, the category which holds greater heterogeneity between groups is that of Practice (Table 2) at which the more experienced coaches feel more competent at the planning level, as well as in practice organization and competition.

Discussion

Based on literature it was expected that higher experienced coaches award more importance to knowledge and competences for coaching, as well as express higher levels of self perception of competence in several domains of coaching knowledge and competences than less experienced coaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999; Gould et al., 1990; Jones et al. 1997; Salmela, 1996). The findings of this study corroborate those expectations and were similar to those reported by Borges (2009) and Cunha (2008). Results make

	G1 M±SD	G2 M±SD	G3 M±SD	F
A - COMPETENCES				
A1 - Related to Practice:				
- Doing annual planning	3,80±0.90	3.93±0.94	4.33±0.71	5.638(2)
- Doing pluri-annual planning	3.54±0.97	3.57±0.88	3.75±0.87	1.779(2)
- Assess/modify pluri-annual planning	3.53±1.05	3.60±0.96	3.75±0.85	2.665(2)
A2 - Related to Competition:				
- Articulate the orientation of competition with the annual plan	3.68±0.80	3.84±0.71	4.08±0.63	4.208(2)
A3 - Related to General Aspects:				
- Learning autonomously	4.18±0.83	4.24±0.62	4.43±0.73	1.828(3)
B - KNOWLEDGE				
B1 - Related to Practice:				
- About contents and transmission strategies	4.34±0.56	4.21±0.62	4.51±0.59	3.547(3)
B2 - Related to Management:				
- Management of competition athletes' careers	2.51±	2.81±	2.86±	3.446(2)

Significant Differences ($p < 0.05$): (1) between G1 and G2; (2) between G1 and G3; (3) between G2 and G3

Table 1. Comparisons of the importance awarded to the professional competences by coaches according to coaching experience: Summary of the significant results

apparent a noteworthy distinction between the more experienced and the less experienced coaches in the degree of importance awarded to higher complex competences, such as long term planning and career management of competition oriented players.

Regarding the self-perception of competence, besides the numerous differences found between high experienced and low experienced coaches through the domains of coaching competences related to practice, competition, management and coach

	G1 M±SD	G2 M±SD	G3 M±SD	F
A – COMPETENCES				
A1 – Related to Practice				
- Planning the practice session	3,82±0,73	3,91±0,63	4,20±0,73	4,374(2 3)
- Doing annual planning	3,41±0,82	3,60±0,67	4,08±0,77	11,564(2 3)
- Doing pluri-annual preparation plan	3,09±0,94	3,34±0,69	3,67±0,86	6,848(2)
- Organising and conducting practice	4,04±0,63	3,95±0,69	4,37±0,70	5,969(2 3)
- Organising and implementing the annual plan	3,54±0,82	3,62±0,64	4,04±0,80	6,809(2 3)
- Organising and implementing the pluri-annual plan	3,07±0,97	3,21±0,79	3,78±0,88	10,093(2 3)
- Assessing and modifying the practice	4,09±0,66	3,90±0,79	4,24±0,74	2,987(3)
- Assessing and modifying the annual planning	3,63±0,77	3,72±0,79	4,06±0,76	4,694(2)
A2 - Related to Competition:				
- Preparing the athlete for the competition	3,94±0,75	3,83±0,73	4,20±0,60	3,871(3)
- Preparing the competition	3,76±0,70	3,64±0,64	4,08±0,71	5,916(2 3)
- Establishing a pluri-annual competition plan	3,25±0,80	3,29±0,59	3,71±0,76	6,777(2 3)
- Directing an athlete in competition	4,03±0,69	3,88±0,82	4,39±0,64	7,206(2 3)
- Articulating competition with annual plan	3,46±0,68	3,40±0,86	4,12±0,71	15,395(2 3)
- Articulating competition with pluri-annual plan	3,19±0,78	3,02±0,95	3,73±0,83	10,144(2 3)
A3 - Related to Management:				
Head coaching and coordination of other coaches	3,03±1,15	3,18±0,96	3,51±0,95	3,17(2)
- Lead an organisation of different sports agents	2,72±1,07	3,05±0,83	3,33±0,96	6,065(2)
A4 - Related to coach education:				
Providing orientation to beginning coaches	2,50±1,02	3,00±0,76	3,61±0,83	23,385(2 3)
Mentoring and coordination of other coaches	2,35±1,00	2,71±0,80	3,47±0,76	24,348(2 3)
A5 -Related to Personal and Social				
- Communicating ideas	3,51±0,75	3,36±0,80	3,80±0,70	4,995(3)
B - KNOWLEDGE				
B1 - Related to Practice:				
- Practice management	3,87±0,71	3,93±0,62	4,29±0,70	6,359(2 3)
B2 - Related to Competition:				
- Planning and organising competitions according to athletes' needs.	3,38±0,92	3,50±0,57	3,92±0,69	7,948(2 3)

Significant Differences ($p < 0.05$): (1) between G1 and G2; (2) between G1 and G3; (3) between G2 and G3

Table 2. Significant results about the perceived competence

education, it was also verified that several significant differences between the high experienced and the intermediate experience groups. Curiously, no significant difference was reported between the low experience and intermediate experience groups. Results seem to support that the 10 years of experience rule may also extend to the evaluations coaches make about the importance of knowledge and competences and particularly about the self-perception of competence.

In the competence of advising beginning coaches, contrarily to what is shown by Cunha (2008), there are significant differences between the high experienced

group and the other two groups, with high experienced coaches ranking higher than the other groups. Regarding the specific knowledge of acting once again the high experienced coaches are those with a greater perception of competence, which corroborate findings reported by Cunha (2008) and Borges (2009).

Concluding, this paper points up professional experience as an important variable to distinguish the importance awarded to knowledge and competences domains for sports coaching, as well as the self-perception of levels of knowledge and competences in those domains.

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