

Coaches' Competency and Sports Performance in Universities in The North-East Zone, Nigeria.

Nashshon H. Likki¹; Baba N. Gurama²; John Z. Vurho¹; Bulus Tikon² & Stephen S. Hamafyelto¹

¹Department of Physical and Health Education, University of Maiduguri,

²Department of Physical and Health Education, College of Education Zing,

E-mail: nahshonlikki@gmail.com)

Abstract

Coaches are at the centre of any effective sport performance by athletes. Their competency is therefore key to the caliber of athletes they produce. The competency of coaches invariably translates into good performance by most athletes. This study determined the relationship between coaches' competency and sports performance in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria.. The total participants were (n=24) male coaches only. There are (n=8) coaches in ATBU, Bauchi; (n=8) coaches in MAU, Yola and (n=8) coaches in UNIMAID in the North-East Zone, Nigeria. The mean age of participants was 28 (3.33). The Coach Competency Questionnaire for Sports (CCQS) and Sports performance Questionnaire (SPQ) were used for data collection. The CCQS yielded a reliability index of .83 and SPQ yielded the reliability index of .66 using split-half through Kurder-Richardson coefficient. Participants were asked to rate themselves by indicating their level of agreement with the statements in coaches competency on a scale of 4 = strongly agree to 1= strongly Disagree. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 20. The results showed that there was significant relationship between coaches' competency and sports performance, which showed that coaches' competency was related to sports performance. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that coaches demonstrated positive coaching competency, which facilitated their performance. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among other things that coaches should be trained through attending National Institute of Sports to increase proficiency in the field of coaching as well as sponsoring coaches to attend coaching clinics, seminars and workshops to educate them and to be abreast with innovations in the rules and regulations governing sports competitions.

Keywords: Coaches, Competency, Sports, Performance, North-East

Introduction

Coaches, who are perceived as high in training and instruction with democratic and autocratic behaviours, tend to have teams that are more cohesive. This shows that the way a group of athletes function together is related to the coaching behaviours of her coach (Gardner, Shields, Bredemeier & Bostrom, 1996). Just as collective efficacy is beginning to change some views on the necessary factors important for successful outcome, some focus have been on athletes' perceptions of coach's competency and how the perception impacts successfully on team performance. There appears to be a significant gap in the current literature investigating athletes' perceptions of coach's competency, especially as a possible predictor of overall sport performance. This shift in focus from the coach to the athlete appears to be important in how a team views its leadership, that is the coach that has an overall ability and technical knowhow to train the student-athletes from amateur to professional athletes (Manning, 2008).

Ede, Hwang and Feltz (2011) explained the concept of coach's competency to represent a coach's belief in his own ability to effectively teach and enhance the performance of his athletes. The concept is similar to self-efficacy among athletes. Coach's competency is fewer situation specific and includes beliefs about one's ability to influence athletes in the areas of motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building. These competency beliefs are influenced by a number of factors, including support of athletes, schools, parents, community, and administrators. Ede, Hwang and Feltz (2011) opined that coach's competency beliefs influences coaching behaviours, athlete satisfaction and performance. Kavussanu, Boardley, Jutkiewicz, Vincent and Ring (2008) stated that coaches are considered influential individuals in athletes' lives. Coaches can positively affect athletes' performances, behaviors, psychological and emotional well-being. The main medium through which coaches exert influence on sport participants is their own behaviours, and coaches who have a positive impact on athletes engage in effective behaviours. Effective coaching behaviours are those that result in successful performance and positive psychological outcomes in athletes such as high perceived ability, self-esteem, and enjoyment. Therefore, effective coaching can have an influence on aspects of the athletic experience. Coach's competency has focused on the effects of coach behaviour on individual athletes' level of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, perception of competence, motivational goal orientation, and trait anxiety (Horn, 2002).

Coach's competency has been rather generally conceived as the behavioural process of influencing individuals and group toward set goals. Obviously, this is a broad definition that encompasses many dimensions of coaches leadership behavior, including the process used to make decisions, the type of learning activities used in practice situations, the type and frequency of feedback given in response to athletes' performances, the techniques use to motivate individual athletes and the type of relationships established with athletes (Horn, 2002). Horn (2002) continued that coach's competency has been motivated by a desire to identify the most effective coaching characteristics, leadership styles, or behavioural patterns. In this respect coach's competency typically is operationalized in terms of outcome scores. That is, effective coaching personality, leadership style, or set of behaviours is defined as that which results in either successful performance outcome or positive psychological responses on the part of the athletes.

Team performance in any event may be predicted by many factors including cohesiveness, competitiveness, athleticism, years of being together, intrinsic motivation and athletes satisfaction invariably affect performance of athletes (Manning, 2008). Coaches' competency influence learning and performance of athletes through game strategies, techniques and character building that bring about cohesion and collective efficacy for the student-athletes to achieve set goals (Horn, 2002). Manning (2008) posited that in team

sports, understanding the impact of different factors on a team's performance can be used to increase successful outcome or better performance. Understanding the relationships among key factors should increase the ability to successfully utilize team strength and affect weaknesses, ultimately better impacting whether a team succeeds or fails.

Banack, Bloom and Falcao (2012) opined that in order to build positive environments promote cognitive and motor development for children in sport; aspiring coaches should seek educational programmes that teach strategies on how to coach effectively. Coaches learn through attendance at coach education programme. This promotes quality coaching to enhance the experiences of athletes. This provides the right foundation of skills, knowledge and attitudes to ensure effective coaching across levels of sports system. The knowledge and course based programme that focuses on skill analysis, practice planning, injuries, nutrition and tactical components of sports. Banack, Bloom and Falcao (2012) explained that athletes of coaches who participated in education program showed greater self-concept and self-esteem, more positive relationships and better communication skills, as well as improved ability to work with others. For example, trained youth hockey coach had found that players who participated in training programme led to improved communication skills by coaches and increase enjoyment, ability to work with others, and team cohesion of athletes.

Based on the conceptual model developed by Feltz, Chase, Moritz and Sullivan (1999) the construct of coaching competency that refers to athletes' evaluations of their head coach's ability to: (a) affect their psychological mood and skills (that is motivation competence), (b) positively influence their character development through sport (that is character building competence), (c) lead during competition (that is game strategy competence), (d) instruct and make diagnoses during practices (that is technique competence), (e) physical conditioning competence) that refers to athletes' perceptions of their head coach's ability to prepare his or her athletes physically for sport participation.

Tenenbaum, Papaianou and Samulski (2013) noted that competencies in this group are concerned with learning and mastering main topics of the discipline, namely psychology (general and sports and exercise related) and sport and exercise (i.e., kinesiology and its related disciplines). The knowledge-based competencies require solid knowledge of investigations, main and specific theoretical issues and explanations, descriptions of behaviours, research methodologies, statistical procedures, measurement and assessment procedures and interpretations, and knowledge of ethical standards and procedures. It is recognized that the theoretical knowledge in psychology and in exercise and sport accumulates distinctively. Knowledge-based competency requires the integration of psychological knowledge-base with sport and exercise knowledge-base into a comprehensive, unified and meaningful entity.

Ramzaninezhad and Keshtan (2009) posited that since coaches affect not only athlete's physical performance but also psychosocial well-being, it is important for an effective coach to become attuned to the many personal and individual needs of athletes. In addition to the technical skills of sport, effective coaches may be required to play many roles within the lives of athletes. These may include being a leader, follower, teacher, role model, limit settler, psychologist, counselor and mentor. Effective coaches are those who are prepared to meet the individual needs of athletes and realize that this makes a difference in the team performance by improving coaching skills and understanding the effect that behaviour can have on athletes.

Bosselut, Heuze, Eys, Fontayne and Sarrazin (2012) agreed that coaching competency is one of the important implicative factors in sport context. Coaching competency was successful using the coaching competency scale. The two dimensions considered are: game strategy competence which asks the following question: How

competent is the head coach in his ability to understand competitive strategies? How competent is the head coach in ability to detect skill errors during practice? It was hypothesized in this study that there is no significant relationship between coaches' competency and sports performance in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria.

Method and Materials

Correlation design was used for the study. The total participants were 24 male coaches. There were 8 Coaches (2 for basketball, 2 for handball, 2 for soccer and 2 for volleyball) from the three federal Universities; that is, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, (ATBU) Bauchi; Modibbo Adama University (MAU), Yola and University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID). The average age of the coaches ranged from 35 –45 years with a mean age of 38.16 (SD=4.32). 8 participants were drawn from each of the three Universities selected. The 24 item Coach Competency Questionnaire for Sport (CCQS) was adopted from Moen and Fikse (2011) and used to collect data for the study. The instrument has the Likert scale response mode of Strongly Agree=4, Agree=3, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=1, which yielded a reliability index of .83. The instrument was grouped into: Communication, Leadership, Pedagogy, and Team Building. The second instrument is a self developed 24 items Sport Performance Questionnaire with response mode of Strongly Agree=4, Agree=3, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=1. The instrument yielded a reliability index of .65 using Split-half through Kuder-Richardson coefficient. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Level of Coaches' Competency to Coach Student-Athletes in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria

Institution	Sports				Decision
	Basketball	Handball	Soccer	Volleyball	
ATBU competence	25.35±6.41	21.30±7.93	22.86±7.37	22.58±8.04	High
MAUTECH competence	22.18±8.27	25.35±6.41	20.51±7.61	22.86±7.37	High
UNIMAID competence	28.78±8.10	28.86±7.37	25.35±6.41	24.63±7.93	High

Key: Scores 1- 9% = Low Level; 10 – 19% = Moderate Level and 20 – 30% = High Level. Table 1 presents mean and standard deviation of coaches' competency in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria. ATBU's results showed high levels of coaches' competency (basketball 25.35±6.41; handball 21.30±7.93; soccer 22.86±7.37 and volleyball 22.58±8.04). MAUTECH's results also revealed high levels of coaches' competency (basketball 22.18±8.27; handball 25.35±6.41; soccer 20.51±7.61 and volleyball 22.86±7.37). UNIMAID also showed high levels of coaches' competency (basketball 28.78±8.10; handball 28.86±7.37; soccer 25.35±6.41 and volleyball 24.63±7.93).

Table 2: PPMCC of Coaches' Competency and Sports Performance in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria. N=24

Variable	Mean	SD	df	r- value	p- value	Decision
Coaches Competency	20.45	1.37	22	.423	.077	Rejected
Performance	18.13	3.68				

Exploring PPMCC table 2, the mean and standard deviation of coaches' competency (20.45 ± 1.37) and sports performance (18.13 ± 3.68) showed high correlation between coaches' competency and sports performance. Examining the r- value (.423) and p- value (.077) revealed significant relationship exists between coaches' competency and sports performance in Universities in the North-East Zone, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between coaches' competency and sports performance.

Discussion

The result of this study reveals that there is significant relationship between coach's competency and sport performance in Universities in the North-East, Nigeria. This result corroborates the findings of Philips and Jubenville (2009) who conducted a study on 15 selected National Christian Collegiate Athletic Association Division-2 Christian Colleges in basketball that examined the four categories of coaching competency. These competencies were; character building competency (CBC), game strategy competency, (GSC), motivation competency (MC), and technique competency (TC), in the analyses the group examined differences for the 24 coaching competency factors. The results showed that player-related factors of starter, non-starter, captain, non-team captain, and academic level were not significant predictors of the combination of coaches' competency. Moen and Fikse (2011) reported that sport specific competence was also a matter of necessity for elite coaches. The understandings of sport specific task demands are to help athletes to develop skills and abilities to meet these demands in action. Coaches emphasize the importance of both formal academic and experiential competence, and it is clear that their sport specific competence must be at a really high level. It is not enough to know how (academic), coaches need to know how to do well (experiential knowledge). This is in accordance with the development in research on coaching education that expanded their interest from what coaches need to know, to what they need to be able to do with what they know.

Moen and Fikse (2011) further explained that competence in pedagogy is also important in order to be successful as an elite coach. The approach towards the athletes in the learning process is essential if it is supported to be successful. It is supposed to be a search for positive assets, not mainly a search for mistakes and defects. The skills within pedagogy are also supposed to bridge a potential gap between the expertise among the coaches and their staff and the athletes. Staff expertise must benefit the athletes. Pedagogy becomes the link between the coach's and their staff's competence, and the actions which are carried out by themselves and their athletes. Pedagogy seems to be what brings out the full potential in the relationship. Competence in team building shares important similarities with leadership, and the coaches argued that establishing functional teams that are beneficial for the athletes is an important leadership competence. The center of attention in team sports is the athletes. Thus, the athletes must be in main focus for all activities and work within the team.

According to Santos, Mesquita, Gracia and Rosado (2010), coaches' perceptions were influenced by their experience, as low experienced coaches rated themselves at lower

levels of competence and with more training needs; also coaches with high education, in Physical Education or others, perceived themselves as more competent than coaches with no higher education. The majority of the coaches perceived themselves to be competent but, they indicated to have training needs, which brings an important feedback to coach education. This suggests that coaches are interested in increasing their knowledge and competent.

This finding is in line with the findings of Moen and Fikse (2011) who reported findings on twenty-eight coaches who expressed their thought on this in a methodologically structured qualitative study involving advanced focus group discussions, the intervention of the top elite coaches, the researchers' interpretations and structural analysis, and the feedback of this to test group. The result summarized those six overall competency categories, each with a repertoire of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes. Skills in communication and leadership were considered to be most important. Mokhtari, Mashhoodi and Rahmati (2013) demonstrated that there is direct correlation between coaches competency dimension. This correlation suggests that the dimensions of coaches' competency can predict the overall team competency. The finding is consistent to Keshtan, Ramzaninezhad, Kordshooli and Panahi (2010) that valuable coach's behaviours play an important role in the promotion of player's performance and finally team success. It can be concluded that coaches instruct athletes in proper skills, techniques and tactics that are necessary for the sport and good relationships with athletes; it contributes to highly successful performance.

The results of the finding supported Ramzaninezhad and Keshtan's (2009) study on "the relationship between coach's leadership styles and team cohesion in Iran football clubs professional league" which found that: coaches' leadership styles have a great effect on team success and team cohesion. Coaches of successful teams exhibited high levels of democratic and social support behaviour. Furthermore, the results of the study provide additional support for Horn's working Model of Coaching Effectiveness 2002 and Chelladurrai's Multidimensional Model of Leadership 1990, which reported that coaching behaviours affect or predict some of the variability in the positive outcomes of athletes' performance and psychological variables such as collective efficacy and group cohesion.

Myers, Vargas-Tonsing and Feltz (2005) found that the overall coaches' competency predicts team satisfaction and winning advantage in male teams. Maleté and Feltz (2000) reported a research that coaches who participated in the coaching courses, progressed significantly in all aspects of coaching competencies. A similar study demonstrated that there is direct correlation among coaches' competency dimensions. Ramzaninezhad and Keshtan (2009) reported that coach's leadership styles are exhibited higher in training and instruction and lower in democratic behaviour. The study found that coaches have more emphasis on training and instruction while expressing a lower preference for autocratic behaviour. The findings are in direct contrast to the findings that coaches exhibited lower in democratic behaviour. The reason is that football coaches in professional levels tend to exhibit lower in democratic behaviour and higher in autocratic behaviour. The study showed that there is a significant relationship between coach's competency styles and team success and the coaches of successful teams exhibited higher levels of democratic and social support behaviours and found significant relationship between coach's leadership styles and team success.

Kavussane, Boardhey, Jutkiewicz, Vincent and Ring (2008) revealed that certain desirable outcomes for both coaches and athletes should result to high level of coach's competency. For example, these outcomes are commitment to coaching and the use of effective motivational techniques for coaches, and satisfaction, performance, confidence, and motivation for athletes. In an empirical work coach's competency has been associated

with intercollegiate coaches' commitment to coaching while motivation and technique competency have been linked to coaches' reports of engaging in training and instruction and giving positive feedback to players. Blon, Watson and Spadaro (2010) supported these findings, which indicated that the coach-athlete relationship has been found to have direct effects on the sport experience and helps to keep athletes participating in sport. The quality relationship that athletes have with coaches may even be more influential than the parent-child relationship regarding some aspects of the sport experience. Coaches who use a supportive interpersonal style have been found to positively influence athletes' feelings of self-determination, positive emotions and sport satisfaction. These findings are congruent with the results of the athletes perceived and increase in caring behaviours from coaches who are trained, which resulted in increases in positive psychosocial experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that coaches demonstrated positive coaches competency, which apparently facilitated the student-athletes' performances. Although previous records of their student-athletes' sport performances did not show that they were on top of the tables, but they were quite satisfied that they worked as teams and pursued the same goals. These showed that coaching competency was positively related to student-athletes' sport performance because athletes scored their coaches high in the continuum.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Coaches should be encouraged to develop high level of coaching competency, which helps design training programmes that meet up with the demands of the student-athletes in camp and during competitions.
2. University authorities should train coaches through National Institute of Sports to increase proficiency in the field of coaching as well as sponsoring coaches to attend coaching clinics, seminars and workshops to educate them in the new rules and regulations governing sports of their endeavours.

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