

(SP) EVALUATING THE COMPETENCIES OF SPORTS MANAGERS IN TAIWAN: A DELPHI APPROACH

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Introduction

In Taiwan, although the sports market has expanded dramatically in recent years, this has raised a number of issues in relation to the development of a skilled and educated workforce within the field of sport management. Thus, there is a significant concern about whether sports managers are competent to effectively carry out their work. In this research project, a three-round Delphi Technique was used to derive a consensus among senior professionals in industry and government and educators on the required competencies for the successful conducting of a sports manager's job in Taiwan. The Delphi Technique is a highly formalized and systematic method for extracting the maximum amount of 'unbiased' independent opinion concerning a given uncertainty, without group discussion, reaching, where possible and appropriate, a reliable consensus among a group of experts (Chan et al. 2001; Mehr and Neumann 1970; Tersine and Riggs 1976). In the literature, it has been applied to competency related studies in public park and recreation agencies, chefs, public health nutritionists, and R&D (research and development) organizations (Guimaraes et al, 2001). However, very little work has attempted to utilize Delphi in developing a consensus on competencies for sports managers. This paper, therefore, reports processes and findings of the Delphi study and these findings are robust across government, academy and practitioner.

Methods and Results

In an effort to select knowledgeable and willing participants, the Taiwan Society of Sport Management (TASSM) was invited to collaborate as a partner in this project. TASSM nominated a total of 33 individuals as key stakeholders in the profession to take part in this study. After contacting the 33 experts, 27 agreed to participate in the study, including 2 from government, 12 from the sports services industry (practitioner group) and the other 13 from academic institutions (academic group) which deliver sports management education at first degree level.

Round 1: Identify competencies of sports managers

A semi-structured face-to-face interview and questionnaire was conducted with each participant in Round 1. 27 participants were asked to provide a minimum of 10 competencies, which perceived as important for the successful conducting of a sports manager's job. From the responses in Round 1, a questionnaire was developed consisting of 79 competency statements.

Round 2: Competencies likelihood ratings

The questionnaire was subsequently mailed to the 27 participants. Each participant was asked to indicate the extent of his or her agreement with the importance of each competency statement based on a 7-point Likert scale. In Round 2, there was no competency on which the 27 participants disagreed about its importance to the successful conducting of a sports manager job. There were 4 competencies rated in the top ten by all three groups, such as "ability to communicate", "skilled at planning", "ability to coordinate" and "skilled at problem solving".

Round 3: Competencies likelihood ratings reconsideration

The questionnaires were subsequently sent out once more to the 27 participants with their second round scores and the mean scores obtained in Round 2. In this round, each participant was given the opportunity to revise his or her first estimates where appropriate in the light of additional information provided. Of the new means in Round 3, 33 were rated higher and 32 were rated lower than the means in Round 2, and 14 remained the same. There is a strong consensus across the panel about the competencies important to a sports manager after two rounds. 6 competencies in Round 3 were rated in the top ten by 3 groups compared to 4 in Round 2.

Discussion

In comparing the means for each competency reported for the academic and the practitioner groups, there were only 4 significant differences among the 79 competencies between academy and practitioner groups in Round 3. These were “skilled at time management”, “skilled at Chinese and Taiwanese”, “knowledge of law” and “ability to search for sponsorship”. This illustrated that on average there was no significant statistical difference between the academic and practitioner groups on the degree of importance of each proposed competency. Moreover, each competency with a mean score below 4.5 could be regarded as being of significantly less importance by participants; 10 competencies fell below 4.5 in both Round 2 and 3 were therefore removed from the list. The list dropped (1) knowledge of sports psychology (2) knowledge of exercise physiology (3) sports related license (4) skilled at sports major (5) knowledge of sports science (6) skilled at sports instruction (7) knowledge of sports rules (8) knowledge of sports sociology (9) knowledge of physical education and sports in China (10) knowledge of Taiwanese history and of the relationship between China and Taiwan.

Conclusions

This study was undertaken with relative success in that a response rate of 82% was achieved, with 100% retention across the three rounds of fieldwork which is relatively high for this type of research. The three rounds of Delphi consultations produced a clear consensus about the competencies important to the successful conducting of a sports manager job. A sports manager competency framework with 69 competencies was developed by 27 participants. For academy and practitioners, the results are useful for curriculum design and employee training. For sport management research, this sports manager competency framework should be further research at each level of management and in different organizations.

Although such a consensus points to the types of competences required across a range of sports management roles, it is nevertheless the case that specialist management activity (e.g. in the health and fitness club sector) may require some specialist knowledge (e.g. with regard to exercise physiology), and further work is required to develop an understanding of core competences in such different sports specialist contexts. Such an understanding of the requirements of particular areas of activity within the sports industries is planned as a subsequent development of the research reported in this paper.

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