

EVALUATING THE PERCEPTIONS OF SPORTS MANAGERS AND ACADEMICS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCIES IN TAIWAN

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INTRODUCTION

Growing and diversifying public interest in the demand for sports has called for greater professional competencies in sports managers in Taiwan. Thus, competency studies have been one of the most important research areas in determining the body of knowledge needed to prepare competent sports managers to effectively manage the various components of sports industries in the future. The purpose of this study was to develop a valid and reliable instrument to evaluate the perceptions of sports managers and academics of the importance of competencies of sports managers in Taiwan.

METHODS

The instrument used in this study was developed through the following procedures: a list of sports management competencies derived from three approaches (systematic review, Taiwan sports management curricula analysis, and Delphi method survey of a group of practitioners and academics); pre-test of the English version of the instrument by six sports management academic experts at Loughborough University; translation of the instrument from English to Chinese; a pre-test of the Chinese version instrument by ten sports management academic experts in Taiwan. The questionnaires were then mailed to a sample of 800 individuals during October, 2006 which included 150 academics who currently teach sports management related courses in Taiwan and 650 sports managers selected based on the experts' recommendation and also the information of sports related company, stadium, and association obtained from the sports category of yellow page website provided by Chunghwa Telecom. Co., Ltd. in Taiwan. All subjects were provided with a packet of information, including a cover letter detailing the nature of study, the support of Taiwan Society of Sport Management (TASSM), the value of a high response rate, implications of the research and instruction for filling out the questionnaire, along with a copy of the survey and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. In order to improve the return rate, a follow-up mail or phone call was made to subjects 14 days after the initial mail-out as a reminder to hasten their response. Approximately three weeks after the initial mailing, a final reminder letter was sent to all. The data collection was concluded on 31 December, 2006. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Principal components factor analysis followed by varimax rotation, one-way MANOVA, and one-way ANOVA were selected as the most appropriate statistical procedures.

RESULTS

Despite a relatively respectable absolute number of responses (n=205). The study had a response rate of 25.6% (n=205) including 83 academicians (40.5%) and 122 practitioners (59.5%), and three-quarters of the total sample were male. Principal components factor analysis, followed by varimax rotation was performed on the response of the subjects. Three commonly employed decision rules were applied to eliminate scales: (1) eigenvalue less than 1; (2) loadings of less than 0.45 on all scale factors; and (3) loadings greater than 0.45 on two or more scale factors (Comrey, 1973, Kankanhalli et al., 2005). Factor analysis evaluation and scale elimination were repeated until the factor structure remained stable. As a result, a total of 11 factors consisting of 54 competencies was produced from factor analysis. These eleven factors accounting for 64.11% of the variance were examined and given the names based on the competency items grouped in that particular factor. In

addition, the internal consistency of the scale was calculated using Cronbach alpha coefficients. These were (F1) Management Techniques (14 items, $\alpha=0.92$), (F2) Sports-Related Theory and Foundations (9 items, $\alpha=0.89$), (F3) Service Provision and Development (5 items, $\alpha=0.84$), (F4) Foreign Language and Learning Ability (4 items, $\alpha=0.76$), (F5) Leadership (4 items, $\alpha=0.73$), (F6) Finance, Economics and Analytic Abilities (4 items, $\alpha=0.73$), (F7) Communication (3 items, $\alpha=0.69$), (F8) Political Awareness (4 items, $\alpha=0.80$), (F9) Accounting and Risk Management (2 items, $\alpha=0.62$), (F10) Information Technology (2 items, $\alpha=0.73$), (F11) Management Theory and Knowledge Management (3 items, $\alpha=0.69$). The result of one-way MANOVA revealed that there was significant difference between academicians and practitioners regarding the importance of competencies ($F=1.764$, Sig.=0.004). One-way ANOVA was then used to find out the importance of which particular factors were perceived differently between academics and practitioners. Significant differences ($P < 0.05$) were found in 5 factors which were Service Provision and Development, Foreign Language and Learning Ability, Political Awareness, Accounting and Risk Management, Management Theory and Knowledge Management.

DISCUSSION

There were two main findings of this paper. First, the perceptions of competencies critical to the successful conducting of a sports manager's job have been identified. It is perceived by academics and practitioners as important that a successful sports manager should have the following competencies in order to perform his or her work successfully, and these important competencies are management techniques, sports-related theory and foundations, service provision and development, foreign language and learning ability, leadership, finance, economics and analytic abilities, communication, political awareness, accounting and risk management, information technology, and management theory and knowledge management. Second, the perceptual difference between sports management academicians and practitioners on the importance of which competencies are critical to managerial effectiveness has been found, though the difference is slight. In this study, the findings indicated that each of 11 factors received a mean score above 5.0 based on a 7-point Likert scale (with 7: extremely important) which means on average none of these competencies were perceived as unimportant by all respondents. Therefore, although the result of this study confirmed the perceptual difference between sports management academics and practitioners, the difference is slight which only reported different degrees of agreement of the importance for all competencies. In conclusion, the findings of the study have several significant implications for both academicians and practitioners. Sports management academicians can use the results to design curriculum or to modify their existing curricula in a more integrated and competency-based educational program. For sports management practitioners, the results can serve as a guideline for the employers to recruit a competent sports manager, one who can successfully conduct a sports management job, and also evaluate the actual performance of employees in a work role. The findings are also of particular value to those concerned with management training including both employers and employees.

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