

# THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE COACH: MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN SPORTS CLUBS?

Author:  
Jorge Soares

email:  
j.soares@uma.pt

Co-authors:  
Antunes, Hélio

University:  
University of Madeira

Faculty:  
Center for Social Sciences - Department of Physical Education and Sports

## Abstract

This paper aims at analysing the practice of assessing the performance of coaches in the management of sports' clubs.

The assessment of the performance of coaches is a systematic and formal process and is a part of the management of human resources. It assesses the results obtained by the staff with the aim of improving their professional performance. Both management based on objectives and the assessment of the work done by the staff contribute to a more efficient performance and better results for the organization.

In Sports' clubs whose main activities are competition and practice, the coach has an important role in achieving objectives as stated in Cunnings and Dixon (2003), Gilbert and Trudel (2004). For this reason the performance of the coach has to be rigorously assessed, structured and controlled (Chen, 2003; Feltz, Hpler, Roman & Paiement, 2009; Horn, 2002; Mallet & Côté, 2006).

However, literature shows that management and the performance assessment of the coaches in sports' clubs are neglected or, most of the time, ill conducted and misinterpreted out of fear. Assessors fear the reaction they might get from coaches, who in turn fear the consequences the assessment results might have (MacLean, 2001 Taylor; Doherty & McGraw, 2008). 223 participants were chosen using random sampling. This number corresponds to 27% of the coaches working in sports' clubs on Madeira Island, Portugal in the 2009/2010 season.

Individual questionnaires with closed-end questions were used to collect data. The questions, which were made up by the data collectors, were validated by 5 experts with

research and papers published in the field of coaching and coach training. SPSS software was used to treat the data. Using a dependency test of chi-square, an inferential analysis was conducted and that resulted in a margin of error inferior to 0,05.

The results of the study show that the performance assessment of coaches in sports' clubs is a fragile and rather unstructured practice. Of the 223 coaches questioned, 42% said their performance as coaches had never been assessed. Of the coaches that had been assessed before, about half said they were unable to specify exactly how many assessments they had undergone. Nevertheless, most of them (94%) had clear objectives regarding their performance, the way they did their job and whether or not they were in competing regionally, nationally and internationally. The main assessors and the people responsible for the assessment were the voluntary sports leaders, even though the coach himself also did some self-assessment.

The instruments used by the coordinators and sports leaders to assess coaches were the direct observation of the training sessions and competitions (21%), the daily register based on the number of times the athletes practiced (15%), as well as the coaches' reports on the work done (12%). The participation of the coach in establishing the objectives and the negotiation with the leaders were two relevant factors that made coaches succeed in their roles.

Among the most important objectives of coaching are: an increase in the physical and technical skills of the athletes (16%), the development of emotional and social skills of the athletes (13%) and an improvement in the competition results (11%).

When comparing the objectives of the performance of the assessment with the level of intervention of the coaches in the competition, it was verified that coaches in local and regional competitions value more the improvement of physical, technical and tactical abilities of the athletes/team ( $p=0,005$ ) and the ability to maintain the number of athletes throughout the season ( $p<0,001$ ). Whereas national coaches showed more interest in the following objectives: identifying talents that can compete in a high level of competition ( $p=004$ ); ensuring the team remains in the division it is in, ( $p=001$ ), and organizing traineeships to prepare athletes for competitions ( $p=007$ ).

The results suggest that there should be the introduction of structured practices that assess the performance of the coach in sports' clubs and differentiation in the assessment of coaches according to the level of the competition. We also suggest the introduction and validation of reliable tools to evaluate the coaches, more than the observation of training and competitions. To improve the performance of sport coaches the sport manager needs to check systematically whether or not objectives are being met. In the context of sports' clubs where voluntary sports leaders (members of the board) have the power of decision making, the role of the sports manager or coordinator in the process of monitoring and observation of the coach, can be a determining factor for the introduction of more rational realistic and efficient management, as well as the improvement in the results of the organization.

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