

## **Developing a competency scale for sport coaches**

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### **Abstract**

The importance of operational competencies of sport coaches is widely acknowledged in the literature, yet there appears to be a lack of research in this field. The purpose of this research study was to develop a competency scale for sport coaches. Based on literature regarding operational competencies of sport coaches, an empirical study was conducted to identify the most important competencies, using multiple-item indicators from previous studies. A quantitative research approach was employed, whereby a questionnaire survey was conducted in order to develop a competency scale for sport coaches. The findings of the study provide important insights into the operational competencies required by sport coaches based on an empirical investigation of the perceptions of sport coaches. The findings of this study can be implemented to develop training programmes for sport coaches; develop performance appraisal tools and assist coaches in addressing areas of deficiency regarding their ability to coach.

**Keywords:** Sport coaches, coaching, role, operational competencies, job performance.

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### **Introduction**

Over the past two decades sport has emerged as one of the most important social institutions, having vast significance globally (Chadwick, 2009; Saayman, Rossouw & Saayman, 2008). Sport has been identified as an important contributor to economic activity and wealth creation as it is a significant economic sector at the individual, organisational and national levels (Goldman & Johns, 2009). Zygband and Collignon (2011) estimate the worldwide appeal of sport translates into the sport industry being worth between €350 billion and €450 billion (US\$450-\$620 billion). Tsiotsou (2012) states that sport is the twentieth largest industry worldwide, with an estimated worth of US\$500 billion. The sport industry in North America is positioned among the top 15 industries in the country (Lu, 2011).

Sport sponsorship, as a component of the sports market, is currently regarded as the most widely and often used type of sponsorship (Tsiotsou, 2012). The global sport sponsorship market is estimated, according to IEG (a company providing insights, evaluation and guidance to the global sponsorship industry), to have reached US\$43 billion at the end of 2011 (Africa Investor, 2012). Owing to the

expansion of sport activities combined with mass media broadcasting, the popularity of celebrity professional athletes has increased significantly (Liu, Huang & Minghua, 2007), to the extent that most of the highly successful athletes have become powerful role models who represent an idealised version of life (Bevan-Dye, Dhurup & Surujlal, 2009). Given the significant strides that the sport industry has taken in its growth, professional sport has rapidly developed into a major operation (Noll, 2003), with global recognition found in the revenue, governance, entertainment incomes, and dynasties generated (Hunter & Mayo, 1999). Governments worldwide have thus begun investing heavily in sport to enhance economic and social development (Hoye, Smith, Westerbeek, Stewart & Nicholson, 2006).

Sport in South Africa is a multibillion-rand industry, contributing more than 2 percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2013). This is reflected in the direct expenditure on sports sponsorship which, according to the South African sport and sponsorship market research company, BMI, is estimated at US\$540 million for South Africa (BMI, 2011). Owing to South Africa successfully hosting several international events, most notably the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 2003 Cricket World Cup, the 2009 Confederations Cup and the 2010 Federation International de Football Association (FIFA<sup>®</sup>) World Cup, an increased awareness, interest and demand for successful performance in various sports and sport events has arisen (Mafini, Surujlal & Dhurup, 2011). The increased demand and participation in sport has resulted in a corresponding demand for sport coaches at all levels.

## **Sport coaching**

In the sport environment, the coach is a central figure, having the responsibility of providing athletes the opportunity to realise excellence in a range of technical, physical and moral areas (Hardman, Jones & Jones, 2010). According to Martens (2004), coaching comprises directing athletes in learning technical, tactical and life skills, including coordinating and guiding athletes in the implementation of these skills. Drakou, Kambitsis, Charachousou and Tsetzis (2006) view coaching as an educational activity, which assists athletes to develop in the sporting domain. Le Roux (2007) indicates that although coaching is not necessarily the most difficult occupation, not everyone is suited to becoming a coach. The author elaborates that becoming a coach requires skill and ability in a particular sport, together with the knowledge and wisdom to be receptive to and have insight into the self and others, as well as to be spurred on by an emotional dedication to sport. Drakou et al. (2006) concur, emphasising that in order for coaches to teach their athletes the required skills, techniques and tactics, the coach's acquisition of adequate and appropriate sport knowledge is essential. Mohammadi, Izadi and Salehi (2011) suggest that sport coaches should refresh

their knowledge and skills continuously in order to stay abreast of developments in a complex and ever-changing sport world.

Owing to the professionalisation and commercialisation of numerous major sports, the role of coaching has evolved considerably in the past 20 years, influencing the way coaches perceive their function and responsibilities. Therefore, although a challenge, understanding the role of the sport coach is important in effectively analysing coaching competence (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2008). The role of the sport coach is diverse, ranging from that of a demonstrator, instructor and friend to mentor, adviser, motivator, organiser, leader, planner, decision maker and the fountain of all knowledge regarding sport and training (Szabo, 2012a). Various researchers (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Vallée & Bloom, 2005; Le Roux, 2007; Szabo, 2012a) agree that the role of the sport coach is important and challenging. The sport coach is required to create a conducive learning environment and find ways to motivate athletes (Szabo, 2012a), provide moral education, assist and encourage the athletes in attaining their full potential ethically (Hardman et al., 2010); and be supportive and build confidence (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) assert that the coaches' roles may change over the time that athletes spend with them. Szabo (2012b) argues that a successful coach is not only focused on the present but also has a futuristic outlook, being receptive to the latest breakthrough in science and technology and be ready to apply up-to-date knowledge in the everyday practical training. The author adds that the most important task of a coach is to produce strong, healthy, stable and happy athletes, who are good competitors, and good sport players. In order to fulfil this important task, coaches are required to possess certain competencies.

Defining the term 'competence', is challenging as there is a lack of consensus regarding its precise meaning. Stravropoulos, Kipreos, Tripolitsioti and Strigas (2012) concluded that the behaviours, knowledge and composite skills required to perform successfully in a specific field, may be referred to as competencies. McInerney and Buckeridge (2011:21) define competency as "the application of specific knowledge and skills to a required standard of performance in a given situation". Myers, Beauchamp and Chase (2011:412) describe coaching competence as "the athletes' perceptions of their coach's ability to affect the athletes' learning and performance". In the context of this study, coaching competence is viewed as those skills and knowledge required by sport coaches to perform successfully in a given sport.

Szabo (2012b) believes that coaches typically lack universal competences, even though successful coaches need to be exceptionally skilful when making decisions. Moen and Fikse (2011) opine that coaches' should be able to organise, implement and evaluate short- and long-term strategies, conduct training

sessions and support athletes during practices and competitions, and manage and co-ordinate human resources. As normal human beings, coaches have a combination of positive and negative characteristics (Szabo, 2012b). They acquire skills by learning and accumulating coaching knowledge and by living the coaching role, while interacting with others in doing so, and reflecting upon this experience (Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007).

The coach is required to have the ability to assist athletes by developing and preparing different training programmes, assist athletes to develop new skills, communicate effectively with athletes, use and create evaluation tests to monitor the training progress and process and predict sport performance (Szabo, 2012b). This implies that sport coaches need a variety of skills in order to succeed in coaching.

Coaching is a core ingredient that contributes to the success of athletes. A coach's level of coaching competence is typically judged in relation to a variety of positive behaviours elicited from his/her athletes, as well as the level of success the athlete enjoys. Moen and Fikse (2011) argue that in order for sport coaches to believe in their capabilities and to expand their competencies, they need to be familiar with the demands and requirements expected of them. Myers, Wolfe, Maier, Feltz and Reckase (2006) state that the regular evaluation of key coaching competencies is important for continued coaching, improvement and development. It is the key factor of building and developing a successful athlete or team. Coaches play a pivotal role in helping athletes to realise their potential and sport organisations in achieving their objectives. A review of the literature indicates that very little research has been conducted regarding sport coaching competencies. The purpose of this study was to develop a competency scale for sport coaches. The findings may be used to develop training programmes for coaches, develop performance appraisal tools to appraise coach performance and to assist coaches to address areas of deficiency regarding their ability to coach.

## **Methodology**

### *Design*

In order to develop a competency scale this study adopted a quantitative approach to establish what competencies practising coaches perceive as important to coaching. Quantitative research involves quantifying data and applying some form of statistical analysis (Malhotra, 2007) to measure knowledge, perceptions or opinions regarding a phenomenon (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

### *Sample*

Sport coaches in the Gauteng province of South Africa were requested to participate in the study. This geographic location was chosen because the coaches were easily accessible to the researchers. The criteria used to identify the coaches were the following 1) having coaching experience in any type of sport, 2) having participated competitively in sport, and 3) were currently actively involved in coaching. A non-probability judgement sample of 300 sport coaches was selected for the purpose of the study.

### *Instrument*

A questionnaire was developed for the study. In Section A, participants were requested to provide demographic information. Section B of the questionnaire requested responses to items relating to coaching competencies. The development of this section necessitated a comprehensive review and analysis of the literature related to sport coaching competencies to assist in the generation of items related to coaching competencies. In generating the items for this section, input was requested from researchers who had conducted research on sport coaching as well as from sport coaches. This resulted in a 59-item scale to investigate the competencies required of sport coaches to coach. Thereafter, the researchers who conducted research on sport coaching and the coaches who assisted in the generation of items were requested to provide feedback concerning the face validity, content validity, comprehensibility, and comprehensiveness of the scale. Based on their feedback, minor grammatical changes were made to the questionnaire. Items in the scale were scored on a six-point Likert scale, which provided a three-point range of discrimination for both positive and negative choices (that is, “strongly agree”, “agree”, “agree somewhat”, “disagree somewhat”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”). The rationale was that the respondents could not remain neutral. Rather they were forced into selecting an option, which could be positive or negative. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested on 110 sport management students and returned an acceptable Cronbach Alpha of 0.973 for Section B. The completed questionnaire was carefully re-examined and found suitable to be administered to the identified sample. Fieldworkers assisted in administering the questionnaire. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and assuring the participants they would remain anonymous and that the data would be used for research purposes only was attached to the questionnaire.

### *Data analysis*

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21) was used to analyse the data. Frequencies were used to report on the demographic profile of the sample. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to examine the factor

structure of the Competency Scale for Sport Coaches (CSSC). Following the approach of Martindale et al. (2010) in developing a questionnaire the criteria used for the number of factors to be retained included the scree test, a preference for simple, clean structures over complex ones, the magnitude of the Kaiser-Guttman eigenvalue (minimum required over 1.0) and the interpretability of the factors. According to the authors this combination may be employed because no single technique has been shown to be accurate over a wide array of circumstances.

### *Reliability and validity*

The overall reliability of the CSSC (Cronbach  $\alpha=0.931$ ) reflected an acceptable degree of cohesiveness among scale items and provided an indication of the extent to which a set of items are interrelated and internally consistent with each other. The reliability of the sub-scales ranged from 0.735 to 0.900, with all factors satisfying the benchmark level of 0.70 as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

## **Results**

### *Sample characteristics*

Of the questionnaires distributed, 233 questionnaires were received from the sample of 300 participants, which translates into a response rate of 78 percent. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

### *Principal Component Analysis (PCA)*

Exploratory factor analysis using PCA was used to determine the factor structure of the CSSC. To test the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were used. The KMO is commonly used to establish whether the set of items is suitable for a factor analysis procedure. Its values range from 0 to 1. A value of 0.70 or more is generally considered sufficiently high while a value below 0.50 is considered unsatisfactory (Norman, 2004). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) for the study was 0.928, which is considered 'marvellous' for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2=10727.34$ ;  $df = 1711$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) provided further evidence that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

**Table 1:** Description of sample

Variable	Categories	N	n	%
Gender	Male	231	118	51
	Female	231	112	49
Sport coached*	Athletics	233	118	
	Cricket	233	103	
	Hockey	233	35	
	Netball	233	58	
	Rugby	233	53	
	Soccer	233	29	
	Swimming	233	7	
	Tennis	233	24	
	Other	233	10	
Ethnic group	Black/African	211	52	25
	Coloured	211	6	3
	Indian/Asian	211	11	5
	White	211	142	67
Age	18-25	218	46	21
	26-25	218	64	29
	36-45	218	40	18
	46-55	218	45	21
	56 and older	218	23	11
Sport coaching experience	0-3 years	220	55	25
	4-6 years	220	51	23
	7-10 years	220	36	16
	11-20 years	220	46	21
	More than 20 years	220	32	15
Sport participation experience	Informal participation	219	66	30
	Regional level	219	65	30
	Provincial level	219	64	29
	National level	219	21	10
	International level	219	3	1

\* **Note:** Some coaches coached more than one sport.

Varimax rotation, which has been used in previous studies (e.g. Dhurup, Singh & Surujal, 2006; Gillespie, Derevensky & Gupta, 2007) was employed to minimize the number of variables that have high loadings on a factor and enhance the interpretability of the factors. Using a minimum eigenvalue of 1, the PCA extracted ten factors. An examination of the rotated factor matrix revealed that thirteen items multi-loaded on more than one factor. These items were subsequently removed and the iterative process was then re-run three times to achieve a clear factor structure. Items that were deleted during the factor extraction process were those that reflected low factor loadings, cross-loadings or low communalities. The final PCA ( $KMO = 0.922$ ) was performed on 29 items resulting in seven factors that accounted for 68.64 percent of the variance and two to nine loadings on each factor. Malhotra and Birks (2003) recommend that the factors extracted should account for at least 60 percent of the variance. Through the scree plot criterion, a 29-item scale which captured seven distinct factors accounting for 68.64 percent of the variance was the most interpretable in the study. In terms of the eigenvalue criterion, seven factors also reflected an appropriate factor extraction with eigenvalue greater than one.

The final rotated factor matrix, eigenvalues and percentage of variance explained by each factor are reflected in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Rotated component matrix

<b>Factor and variable descriptions</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Factor 1: Leadership and motivation (<math>\alpha = .900</math>)</b>							
Understand the demands of sport	.538						
Encourage athletes to perform better	.574						
Identify strengths and weaknesses of athletes	.527						
Lead by example	.507						
Be motivating	.678						
Display commitment	.608						
Display confidence in coaching	.766						
Provide guidance to athletes	.775						
Develop a healthy relationship with athletes	.784						
<b>Factor 2: Managing the competitive experience (<math>\alpha = .846</math>)</b>							
Manage conflict		.527					
Give clear instructions to athletes		.700					
Meet deadlines		.719					
Display enthusiasm		.654					
<b>Factor 3: Communication (<math>\alpha = .800</math>)</b>							
Demonstrate good writing skills			.595				
Demonstrate good verbal skills			.597				
Help athletes with problem solving			.554				
Coordinate coaching-related tasks			.650				
Make decisions swiftly			.707				
<b>Factor 4: Feedback (<math>\alpha = .830</math>)</b>							
Communicate in a clear manner				.856			
Provide constructive feedback				.794			
Provide goal-oriented feedback				.752			
Facilitate discussions with athletes				.631			
<b>Factor 5: Budgeting and marketing (<math>\alpha = .794</math>)</b>							
Adhere to a budget					.765		
Plan a budget					.842		
Attract participation in sport					.581		
<b>Factor 6: Support (<math>\alpha = .761</math>)</b>							
Help athletes with their personal problems						.796	
Help athletes with their professional problems						.714	
<b>Factor 7: Planning (<math>\alpha = .735</math>)</b>							
Plan an athlete's training schedule							.831
Plan specific training sessions							.746
Eigenvalue	11.259	2.162	1.923	1.322	1.156	1.047	1.037
% of variance explained	16.60	10.12	10.11	9.74	8.97	6.77	6.32
Cumulative %	16.60	26.72	36.84	46.58	55.55	62.32	68.64
Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis							
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation							

With regard to validity content, discriminant and construct validities were established for the study. Content validity was ascertained by the pre-testing the questionnaire with experienced researchers as well as sport coaches. In addition, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 110 sport management students in order to

ensure that the variables clearly sought information regarding the competencies required to coach. Finally, discriminant validity was assessed through PCA using varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalisation. Items that loaded on two or more factors (cross-loadings) were deleted. This step of scale refinement aided in improving the validity of the research instrument to more satisfactory levels of discriminant validity i.e. all items loading on only one factor with no cross-loadings (Dhurup & Mohamane, 2007). The seven coaching competencies were identified by an iterative process of deleting items that did not load higher than 0.50 on any factor thus providing an assessment of construct validity.

## Discussion

This study was conducted to identify competencies, which practising coaches perceive as important in order to develop a sport competency scale. Seven factors, namely *leadership and motivation, managing the competitive environment, communication, feedback, budgeting and marketing, support and planning* were identified through factor analysis.

### *Leadership and motivation*

The first factor, *leadership and motivation*, accounted for 16.60 percent of the variance in item scores with an eigenvalue of 11.259. The 10 items that loaded on this factor mainly reflect the different leadership competencies important to sport coaches. Sport coaches appeared to deem leadership and motivation to be significantly important operational competencies in coaching sport. To understand the demands of the sport, display commitment, confidence and passion for the sport, encourage and guide athletes through developing healthy relationships, seem to be pertinent attributes of a sport coach.

Leadership, as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a shared objective (Northouse, 2010), is a critical factor in helping athletes achieving specific objectives (Gould, Voelker & Griffes, 2013). Bradley (2010) opined that a coach is at the helm of a team. As such it is his/her duty to steer athletes and teams towards achieving their aims. For this reason, leadership in sport coaches has often been studied within the literature (Smoll & Smith, 1989; Hastie, 1993; Price & Weiss, 2000; Raedeke, 2004). Le Roux (2007) as well as Vidic and Burton (2011) found that leadership is a necessity for competent sport coaches. As such, goal-setting skills are necessary to give athletes direction in achieving their objectives. Côte and Sedgwick (2003) posit that an athlete's success is somewhat due to the coach's ability to show leadership competency through giving effective instructions, facilitate goal setting, building the athletes' confidence, recognising individual differences and establishing positive relationships with each athlete. According to Wiman, Salmoni and Hall (2010), encouraging athletes on an on-going basis is critical,

thus demanding leadership competency from sport coaches. Trninić, Papić and Trninić (2009) advice that for establishing successful leadership amongst young athletes is especially critical for the sport coach to create a strong relationship with the parents of the athletes.

Besides having leadership competency, as advised by Szabo (2012a), a competent coach should be motivated. Motivation competency of a sport coach refers to the athletes' perceptions of their coach's ability to affect their psychological attitude and skills (Myers et al., 2011). Martens (2012) believes that skilful athletes will not be successful unless they are sufficiently motivated. Sport coaches are expected to demonstrate effective motivational skills and organise practices to promote good sportsmanship and enhance social or emotional growth in athletes (Myers et al., 2006). Therefore, both leadership and motivation are critical competencies in coaching a sport.

### *Managing the competitive environment*

The second factor, *managing the competitive environment*, had five items and accounted for 10.12% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 2.162. This factor is indicative of the importance of sport coaches being competent in managing and providing support to athletes in a competitive sporting environment. Sport coaches agreed that it is of the utmost important that deadlines are met and clear instructions given to athletes

Sport coaches are expected to be competent in preparing athletes or a sport team for the competitive experience. It is critical for the sport coach to manage the sport preparation process effectively as well as developing tactics for guiding athletes or sport teams in competition (Trninić et al., 2009). Wiman et al. (2010) indicate that competent coaches should give tactical, general and technical instructions to athletes to compete successfully in a competitive environment. Therefore, competent sport coaches must have the ability to manage the athletes' competitive experience in order to enhance coaching effectiveness.

### *Communication*

The third factor, *communication*, comprising five items, accounted for 10.11 percent of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.923. The items that loaded on this factor reflect the importance of communication in coaching sport. Sport coaches agreed that although demonstrating good writing and verbal skills and helping athletes with problem solving is important, the two items with the highest loading within this factor, implying utmost importance, is the ability to make decisions swiftly and coordinating coaching-related tasks. As a coach, one must be able to communicate effectively with fellow coaches, athletes, parents, officials, and with one's local organization. Besides interacting with external

stakeholders and management, coaches must be exceptional communicators with their athletes so that they can achieve their potential. Trninić et al. (2009) opine that every athlete is an individual and therefore demands different communication skills from the sport coach.

Johnson, Wojnar, Price, Foley, Moon, Esposito and Cromartie (2013) posit that the ability to communicate is a critical component in becoming a successful coach. The authors argue that knowledge of the technical skills of a sport and having a perfect game plan is not sufficient if coaches are unable to communicate the information to their athletes. Sullivan (1993) found a positive correlation between enhanced interpersonal communication skills and higher levels of team performance.

Effective communication is essential in successful coaching, as the sport coach needs to be competent in communicating effectively in various situations, such as communicating with athletes, other coaches, officials, parents and the public (Martens, 2004).

Chalmers, Surujal and Dhurup (2013) posit that to promote a clear sense of purpose and to ensure that the message received is the same as the message transmitted, is an important attribute of communication. This suggests that the manner in which coaches communicate with their athletes should be at a level that messages from the coach are clearly understood by the athletes. Hoogervorst, Van der Flier and Koopman (2004) argue that communication is more than just transmitting information. The primary objective of communication is to affect behaviour and to focus on behavioural change. In the context of sport coaching this would imply changing athlete behaviour towards improved performance. Weinberg and Gould (2003) argue that the degree of success or failure experienced by coaches is often due to effective or ineffective communication levels. Keeping the lines of communication open between everyone involved allows one to stay up to date with the information one needs to continue running a successful program (Special Olympics, 2012).

### *Feedback*

The fourth factor, *feedback*, accounted for 9.74 percent of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.322. Four items, relating to sport coach competency in providing clear, constructive and goal-oriented feedback and discussions with athletes, loaded on this factor. The item with the highest loading within this factor, indicting significant importance, is the ability for a sport coach to communicate in a clear manner.

Feedback within the realm of sport coaching is an important phenomenon which has been extensively researched. A growing body of evidence in research (e.g.

Nicaise, Cogérino, Bois & Amorose, 2006; Reinboth, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2004; Amorose & Horn, 2000) provide evidence of the important role of feedback in sport coaching. Feedback derives from both internal, achieved through a coach's self-analysis and visualisations of situations, and external sources, sought from mentor coaches, athletes and other sources such as parents (Wiman et al., 2010). Consistent, effective, positive, supportive and informational feedback has been positively linked to increased interest, enjoyment and competence (Amorose & Horn, 2000; Price & Weiss, 2000). By providing constructive information in a positive manner to athletes regarding their performance, coaches can help athletes correct their errors quickly and help them narrow the gap between what they perceived about what they did, what actually happened and how they can improve (Sports Training Advisor, 2013).

### *Budgeting and marketing*

This factor, pertaining to items relating to *budgeting and marketing*, accounted for 8.97 percent of the variance in item scores with an eigenvalue of 1.156. The three items that loaded on this factor is indicative of the importance of a sport coach competence in marketing and adhering to and planning a budget. Sport coaches appeared to deem the planning of a budget to be significantly important, as reflected by this item loading the highest in this factor. Adhering to a budget was the second highest loading within this factor, supporting the notion that budget planning is important.

Sport organisations have evolved into business-oriented operations and have become more profit-oriented than even before. This has resulted in additional responsibilities bestowed upon the coach. In some instances coaches are required to assume managerial roles (Surujlal, 2004). In these roles they are expected to contribute to the budget process as well as enhance the image of the sport organisation through effective marketing strategies. Athletes are, to an extent, 'ambassadors' of a sport organisation. For them to portray a positive image of the organisation, they guided effectively in that direction. The image of the organisation also hinges on the performance of the athletes and team. In the afore-mentioned instances the sport coach plays an integral role.

### *Support*

The sixth factor, pertaining to items relating to *support*, accounted for 6.77 percent of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.047. Only two items loaded on this factor, which relates to the support provided by sport coaches to athletes with their personal as well as professional problems. Sport coaches were in agreement that supporting athletes are key abilities required by the sport coach. This is reflected in the multifaceted nature of their job.

This factor characterises the coach's concern for the welfare of the athletes and is aimed at satisfying the interpersonal needs of the athletes (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). It is a coach's support of the personal and professional needs of athletes in building and creating a positive group atmosphere. This is characterised by a concern for the welfare of athletes (Sherman, Fuller & Speed, 2000). Sport coaches should have the ability to support and help athletes, through forming and professionally regulating a partnership (Szabo, 2012b).

On a professional level participating in competitive sport can be a stressful experience, which may result in athletes being under extreme pressure (Special Olympics, 2012). If this is not carefully monitored and addressed it may have serious consequences not only for athletes themselves but may also influence the performance of the team. Added to this athletes also experience pressure from parents, peers and sponsors. In this case the coach may provide a 'sound board' for athletes' personal problems by providing support and counselling.

### *Planning*

The seventh factor, *planning*, accounted for 6.32 percent of the variance in item scores with an eigenvalue of 1.037. The two items that loaded on this factor reflects the importance of a coach's competence to planning an athlete's training schedule and training sessions.

According to Smit and Cronje (2000) planning is the management function that determines an organisation's mission and goals. It involves identifying ways of attaining the goals and the resources needed to accomplish the tasks. In the context of sport coaching this implies that coaches need to determine in advance what needs to be achieved and visualise the end results so that their training objectives can be set accordingly (Bates, Botha, Botha, Goodman, Ladzani & De Vries, 2005). Demers, Woodburn and Savard (2006) indicate that the sport coach should have the ability to plan safe, structured, purposeful and appropriate training schedules and sessions, according to the athlete's maturity and ability.

In a study on educators Wood (2008) found that one of the key competencies required for success lay in the careful preparation, design and interpretation of training material. In similar vein, in a study on sport coaches, Santos, Mesquita, Graça and Rosado (2010) found planning as the most important competency required for competent sport coaches. Sport coaches, similar to educators, are also required to carefully plan and prepare athletes' training sessions which ensure that the athlete is provided with the most appropriate and effective coaching.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to develop a coach competency scale. The Competency Scale for Sport Coaches (CSSC) provides an understanding of what competencies coaches perceive as important for coaching. The findings of this study can be used to develop training programmes for sport coaches; develop performance appraisal tools and assist coaches in addressing areas of deficiency regarding their ability to coach.

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