Original Article

Self- assessment of tennis coaches relating to athletes, parents and their educational level. The case of Greece.

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Abstract:

In social psychology, self-assessment is the process of looking at oneself in order to assess aspects that are important to one's identity. It is one of the motives that drive self-evaluation, along with self-verification and self-enhancement. The review of literatures showed that participants would prefer to make highly accurate tasks which measured their abilities; however they will be more persistent in tasks which are lower in accuracy. The purpose and goal of the present study was to investigate the level of self-assessment of Greek tennis coaches on knowledge (theoretical and practical knowledge on tennis coaching), as well as their level of cooperation with other parties involved (physicians, parents) and the level of their training regarding issues relating to tennis. The sample comprised of 90 coaches' ages 20 to 52. The grouping results in two groups placed on the factorial axes diagonally in relation to the above mentioned group of variables. The first group is characterized by high self-assessment, good cooperation and large number of seminars. This group (60 individuals) covers the majority of coaches. The second group (30 individuals) is characterized by lack of self-confidence, lack of cooperation and lack of attendance in training and sports events. The first group (60 individuals), present a high degree of self-assessment on both a theoretical and practical level.). The second group shows a universality of views on various issues. This group is characterized by a low level of self-esteem and its members assess accordingly the level of their cooperation with other factors (physicians, parents, management).

Key words: self-assessment, tennis coaches, athletes, parents

Introduction

Coaching as a profession combines knowledge from several disciplines such as physiology, biomechanics, psychology, sociology and others and it has been characterized as ' evolutionary in status' (Abraham & Collins, 2011).

The ITF began a project in 2009 to approve coach education systems under the control of National Federations. This project was established with the help and with the approval of a task force made up of experts/coaching directors of some of the major tennis nations which helped the ITF to establish criteria and minimum standards for coach education systems. By the end of 2011, 10 countries will have ITF approval and by 2012 it is expected that 30+ of the most developed nations will be approved. It is intended to open the approval process to all nations by 2013 and that nations can then apply to be ITF approval based on the agreed criteria at Bronze: (self sufficient at Play Tennis and Level I) Silver: (Self sufficient at Level 2); Gold: (Self Sufficient at level 3).

One of the key elements of players' success is undoubtedly the quality of coaching that players receive (Duffy, Crespo, & Petrovic, 2010). At present in Europe, there is a strong intention for defining coaching as a profession. The implication of this would be that the coaches' skills are defined and recognized by institutional authority with defined ethical standards and secured rights for all coaches (like social security etc.).

According to Boud (1995), all assessment including self-assessment comprises of two main elements: making decisions about the standards of expected performance and then making judgments about the quality of the performance in relation to these standards. When self-assessment is introduced, it should ideally involve students-employees-coaches on both of these aspects. Self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly (Andrade & Du, 2007). In social psychology, self-assessment is the process of looking at oneself in order to assess aspects that are important to one's identity. It is one of the motives that drive self-evaluation, along with self-verification and self-enhancement. Sedikides (1993) suggests that the self-assessment motive will prompt people to seek information to confirm their uncertain self-concept rather than their certain self-concept and at the same time people use self-assessment to enhance their certainty of their own self-knowledge. However, the self-assessment motive could be seen as quite different from the other two self-evaluation motives.

Unlike the other two motives through self-assessment people are interested in the accuracy of their current self-view, rather than improving their self-view. This makes self-assessment the only self-evaluative motive that may cause a person's self-esteem to be damaged. (Sedikides & Strube, 1997).

The review of literatures showed that participants would prefer to make highly accurate tasks which measured their abilities; however they will be more persistent in tasks which are lower in accuracy (Trope & Ben-Yair, 1982). The review of literatures also showed though that participants were more likely to succeed on tasks that they were told were high in accuracy (Trope, 1982). It is suggested that this is because when completing tasks that are highly accurate about a person's characteristics there is more to gain from succeeding in a task as it will therefore give more information about the person's characteristics than if it was low in accuracy.

Self-assessment is a difficult motive to assess, but it is important to self-evaluation as it means that people are able to realize ways in which to improve themselves. (Van Lakerveld, Gussen & Zoete, 2013). The self-assessment is designed to assist coaches to identify current strengths and professional development goals.

Based on review of literature and the research of Chen contacted in 2003 there are 13 competencies that make up this assessment are of particular importance for those with a coaching role such tennis coaches. They represent areas in which you need to excel in order to fulfill your coaching role successfully relating to athletes, parents, assistants, doctors, trainers, other coaches etc.

- **Communicating Instructions.** Showing the tennis players you are coaching how to accomplish the task and clarifying when, where, how much, and to what standard it should be done. The role of tennis coach involves teaching a skill or procedure to players.

- **Setting Performance Goals.** With tennis players, parents and others to establish short-and long-term goals for performance on particular tasks. Effective coaching sometimes starts with pointing someone in the right direction.

- **Providing Feedback.** Carefully observing performance on individual tasks and sharing these observations in a nonthreatening manner. Giving players, parents and others feedback on their task performance is critical to improving their performance. In order to do this effectively, you have to observe the player performing the task, noting what the player is doing well and what can be improved.

- **Rewarding Improvement.** Using a variety of means to provide positive reinforcement to players for making progress on the accomplishment of important tasks. Timing of rewards is important. Don't wait until you see either perfection or failure on the task. Look for growth in task accomplishment and reward that soon after you observe it.

- **Dealing with Failure.** Working mainly with players and parents to encourage them when they do not meet expectations. an individual demonstrates an inability or unwillingness to perform a task according to expectations and standards, you need to be able to deal with the result. Patience can be a virtue or an enabler of more failure. Use it wisely.

- **Working with Personal Issues.** Listening empathically and without judgment and offering emotional support for non-work difficulties. general, tennis coaches are not expected to function as counselors or psychotherapists. Be prepared to refer the players to appropriate sources of professional assistance and adjust the coaching process to support getting through the situation humanely.

- **Confronting Difficult Situations.** Raising uncomfortable topics that are affecting task accomplishment. Coaching often involves situations in which performance has not met expectations. Unmet expectations often lead to finger pointing, denial of personal responsibility, and other dysfunctional behaviors. Talking about these issues can make people uncomfortable. Good coaching requires the ability and willingness to confront difficult and uncomfortable situations head-on, but with tact and diplomacy.

- **Responding to Requests.** Consulting with others on an as-needed basis. Responding to requests in a timely manner. Timely response to requests is a tangible indicator of respect. To build and maintain a healthy coaching relationship, make sure your responsiveness reflects a high level of priority.

- **Following Through.** Keeping your commitments. Monitoring outcomes of the coaching process and providing additional assistance when necessary. Trust is a critical component of any coaching relationship. Keeping your commitments helps build and maintain trust. Showing an ongoing commitment to the long-term success of the player you are coaching also builds a strong relationship.

- **Listening for Understanding.** Demonstrating attention to and conveying understanding of others (players, parents, assistants etc). Listening is another indicator of respect. It requires keeping your mind open to what others say, attending well to both the content of what they say and the feelings they may be expressing (sometimes unconsciously).

- **Motivating Others.** Encouraging tennis players to achieve desired results. Creating enthusiasm and commitment in others. right button to push to help motivate players differs widely. There are no hard-and-fast rules to what motivates anyone. You can be effective by knowing what motivates the person you are coaching and tying his or her desires and goals to the task at hand.

- **Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses.** Identifying root causes of individual performance. Probing beneath the surface of problems. Keenly observing people and events. Defining and articulating issues

effectively. Properly identifying the abilities and interests of the players you are coaching directs your coaching efforts to the most critical areas. This involves keen observation and attention to detail.

• **Building Rapport and Trust.** Showing respect for players, parents, trainers, other coaches, opponents etc. Acting with integrity and honesty. Easily building bonds with others. Making others feel their concerns and contributions are important. Rapport and trust are the cornerstones of an effective coaching relationship. The person you are coaching needs to trust that you have his or her best interests at heart so he or she can be honest with you regarding shortcomings.

An important parameter of training improvement in tennis is the improvement of coaches through the process of self-assessment, the improvement of the level of cooperation with all parties involved (parents of athletes and physicians) and continuous education.

The purpose and goal of the present study was to investigate the level of self-assessment of Greek tennis coaches on knowledge (theoretical and practical knowledge on tennis coaching), as well as their level of cooperation with other parties involved (physicians, parents) and the level of their training regarding issues relating to tennis.

Method

The sample comprised of 90 coaches ages 20 to 52. The mean age was 30 years while 63,4% were males and 36,6% females. From them 87,4% were graduates from university departments of physical education and sport science and 12,2% were former tennis players. Cronbach 0,754 was used to check unit reliability. Research was conducted via questionnaires, with the necessary clarifications given to all participants. Each unit included 14 items and questions were relevant to self-assessment.

Question: In relation to the best coach, my knowledge on tennis training is:

Very good, good, so and so, very low, low, I don't know.

Question: My cooperation with the team's management is:

Very good, good, so and so, very bad, bad, I don't know.

Question: My relation with the parents of athletes is:

Very good, good, so and so, very bad, bad, I don't know.

Question: Write down the number of training events you attend each year.

Yes, no, one, two, three.

Results

Results discuss self-assessment, cooperation and training of tennis coaches. Factorial analysis of the first two axes shows 43,23 % of the variation and two groups of variables. The first group of variables are correlated on the number of events attended by the coaches and the second group regards self-assessment and their view on their cooperation with other factors (parents, physicians, management). The grouping results in two groups placed on the factorial axes diagonally in relation to the above mentioned group of variables. The first group is characterized by high self-assessment, good cooperation and large number of seminars. This group (60 individuals) covers the majority of coaches. The second group (30 individuals) is characterized by lack of self-confidence, lack of cooperation and lack of attendance in training and sports events. Results of descriptive analysis are presented in Figures 1 & 2.

Fig.1. Personal assessment of training sessions

Relevant frequency of self-assessment of Greek tennis coaches regarding training sessions.

- 1) 11,5% of tennis coaches support that in relation to the best coach, their knowledge on training sessions is very good.
- 2) 37,9 % good
- 3) 32,9 % so and so
- 4) 8 % of coaches support that in relation to the best coach, their knowledge regarding training sessions is bad
- 5) 10,3 % replied that they don' t know

Fig.2. Relevant frequency of the view of coaches on their cooperation with other factors (physicians, management, parents)

- 1) 19,3 % of coaches believe their cooperation with other factors is very good
- 2) 43,2 % good.
- 3) 15,9 % so and so
- 4) 9,1 % of coaches believe that their cooperation with other factors is bad
- 5) 12,5 % replied that they don't know

Conclusions-Discussion

According to the results of factorial and descriptive analysis there seem to exist two groups of tennis coaches. The first group (60 individuals), present a high degree of self-assessment on both a theoretical and practical level. The same group considers as satisfactory their cooperation with other factors (physicians, parents, management). On issues of education members of this group consider that they are on a high level (although there is an obvious lack of systematic organization of seminars). The second group shows a universality of views on various issues. This group is characterized by a low level of self-esteem and its members assess accordingly the level of their cooperation with other factors (physicians, parents, management). They consider that their training at educational events can be improved. In result, the largest part of tennis coaches (66,6 %) present a high level of self-assessment. The same group considers as satisfactory their cooperation with other factors (physicians, parents, management), while regarding their education via seminars and tennis tournaments they believe is at a satisfactory level.

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