Student-Athletes’ Perceptions of Men’s Basketball Head Coaches’ Competencies at 15 Selected NCCAA Division II Christian Colleges

Michael B. Phillips
Tennessee Tech University

Colby B. Jubenville
Middle Tennessee State University

Research Problem:

The purpose of this study was to measure the perceptions of student-athletes concerning the coaching competency of men’s basketball head coaches at the Division II level in the National Christian Collegiate Athletic Association (NCCAA). This article would likely be useful to intercollegiate athletics department personnel, particularly athletic directors and other personnel who evaluate coaches within an athletic department. This article would also be useful for college and university presidents to which the athletics department personnel are responsible. The most important individual who would benefit from this article would be the head coach. This article would allow coaches to apply the four dimensions of coaching competency to their own coaching situation as well as create a foundation for evaluating how their student-athletes might perceive them.

Issues:

The important facets and background of this research are to help improve this relationship between coaches and student-athletes, to guide athletics department personnel in evaluating coaching competencies, and to allow coaches to better understand how they can improve their performances. The process of understanding these roles, behaviors, and personalities could help lead to better overall experiences for coaches, student-athletes, and institutions involved. One other facet of this research is to explain the importance of allowing the student-athlete to evaluate the coach. Literature suggests that student-athletes should play a significant role in evaluating their coaches. The authors were motivated by this research due to the fact that both authors have coached college student-athletes and were interested in providing student-athlete perspective on coaching competency that would provide coaches opportunities to enhance their abilities and improve coach/student-athlete relationship.

Summary:

The three questions examined in this research were whether the effect of a student-athletes’ designation of starter, non-starter, captain, non-team captain, and academic level would have on their perception about the men’s basketball head coach. In other words, would a starter have a different or the same perception of the competency level of his coach as a non-starter’s perception of the coach? Would the same hold true for captains and non-team captains and whether or not a student-athlete was a freshman or a senior. Previous research has indicated that the amount of playing time can affect athletes’ attitudes and responses toward coaches (Jubenville, 1999; Jubenville, Goss, & Phillips, 2007; Kuga, 1993). With regards to being a captain, previous research indicates that student-athlete leadership roles affect their attitudes and responses toward coaches (Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1989; Dupuis, 2006; Johnston, 1997; Jubenville, 1999).

With regards to academic classification, previous research indicates that academic levels affect student-athletes’
attitudes and responses toward coaches (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Horn, 2002; Jubenville, 1999; Kuga, 1993; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; Solomon, 1999; Terry & Howe, 1984). The results indicated that no significant differences were found in the student-athletes’ perceptions of the combination of coaching competency categories between starter and non-starter. The results indicated that no significant differences were found in the student-athletes’ perceptions of the combination of coaching competency categories between captain and non-team captain. However, being a team captain was a significant predictor for motivation competence. The results indicated that no significant differences were found in student-athletes’ perceptions of the combination of coaching competency categories between the four academic grade levels (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior).

**Analysis:**

The conclusions and findings for this research were important in that student-athletes were able to evaluate head coaches’ abilities to affect their learning and performance. The results also provide feedback of general demographic information that could be useful in developing the knowledge base regarding categories of coaching competencies. Insight gained from student-athlete perceptions discovered in this study could result in improved experiences for student-athletes and coaches, accelerated player and coach development, and deeper connections between coaches and players. These results will also allow athletics department personnel to determine the usability of the questionnaire which could lead to better evaluation of their coaches. The study should be replicated with other men’s basketball teams at the NCCAA level, and further studies be conducted in other team sports to help develop and further the understanding of the coach/student-athlete relationship. The expansion of coaching demographics to include years of coaching experience, winning percentage, and coaches’ participation levels as college student-athletes would also improve findings. This study could also be replicated using men’s and women’s collegiate basketball teams at the NCCAA (or lower level) college sports division to compare differences in perceptions of coaches between male and female collegiate basketball players.

**Discussion/Implications:**

This research examines how college student-athletes perceive their coaches’ abilities to perform their jobs along four coaching competencies: character building, game strategy, motivation, and basketball techniques. The research reveals that a significant number of student-athletes perceived their coaches to be competent in these four competencies. Many coaches fail to see the importance of the student-athlete taking part in the evaluation process. This article clearly explains the reasoning and the importance of why student-athletes should be involved in the evaluation process. It also highlights the importance of evaluation as a process essential to improving coaching and player performances. This evaluation process can be used as a tool that can enable coaches to evaluate the four dimensions of coaching competency that will help solidify the congruency between the coach and the student-athlete.