

Application of Mystery Shopping Technique in Coaching Evaluation

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According to Shulman, Sullivan and Glanz (2008), teaching supervision was a tool to promote instructional dialogue for teaching improvement. In the field of coaching supervision, McDougall and the AC member (2008) defined that “coach supervision is a process where coaches and mentors reflect on their practice, which provide a basis for learning and developing and providing an opportunity to discuss ethic issues” (p.2). In addition, Hawkins (2006) believed that supervision was the process that a coach was aided by supervisor to understand both client and coach system. These showed that coach supervision is the element of coach professional development and the assurance of work quality. Carroll (2006) stated that there were a series of subsystems in the field of coaching supervision. Different models had their own particular theories and criteria in supervision implementation. Organizations could arrange supervision either formally or informally. The formal supervision took place at a designated time and place. Shulman, et al. (2008) pointed out that the formal supervision practice would influence the teacher’s behavior along with the students’ performance in the classroom. However, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) indicated that the informal supervision would develop more creative scopes. It was more user-friendly by avoiding the designated official structure.

The definition of mystery shopping has been elaborated by numerous researchers. According to Cook (2004), the mystery shopping was a “fact based method to identify the satisfaction level of customer services, improvement areas and trends” (p.18). Some researches defined that mystery shopping was a process that a professional acts as a customer to evaluate the quality of service that they received in a company, without disclosing his identity as a evaluator (Cardello, 2001; Forte, 2001; Royal, 2001; Baraitser et al., 2007). Mystery Shopping Technique (MST) was not limited to hire a professional to act as a customer. In 2000, the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton employed the MST by hiring a professional shopper to act as a consultant to identify the issues of the organization and guided them to make improvement on organization’s current measurement system (Cardello, 2001). As Forte (2001) and Royal (2001) mentioned, mystery shopping has been used in banking, restaurant, hotel, travel agent, post office, gas station, movie theater and fitness center. Recently, fitness centers employed mystery shoppers to evaluate the quality of service provided by trainer, sales and also the appropriateness of gymnastic facilities (International Access Service Limited, 2007).

Mystery shopping became more popular in supervising various industry sectors. For the rapid growth of the sport and recreation industry, the needs for using MST technique were important. However, limited researches have been found by using the MST for coaching evaluation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the current state of coaching staff performance of a National Sport Association (NSA) by applying the MST.

Methodology

Development of the Coaching Evaluation Observation (CEO) checklist involved (a) a study of related literature, and (b) review by an expert panel. The 18-item CEO checklist was designed based on MacLean (2001) and Flannery and Swank (1999). Then, the CEO checklist was reviewed for content validity by a panel of experts, consisting of administrators and professors in the sport and leisure field. Minor changes were made based on the suggestions from the panel of experts. The evaluation through observation contained five distinctive criteria: (a) knowledge of sports, (b) methods and organization, (c) management and communication, (d) motivation and (e) professional, and ethic and personal behaviors. The mystery evaluator was asked to rate the coaching performance using a 5-point Likert scale and the scale was as follows: “1” – inferior; to “5” – superior.

Upon completion of the development of CEO checklist, the mystery evaluation was conducted in the following way. First, a qualified mystery evaluator, with a strong coaching, pedagogy and administrative background, was identified and then trained to conduct the evaluation through observations. Second, the mystery evaluator would mask

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himself/herself secretly and evaluate the performance of the coach under the COE criteria. The entire procedure yielded a total of 44 Coaching Evaluation Observations from 22 coaches (males=12, 54.5%; females =10, 45.5%) as each coach was observed twice within a six-week period. The data was analyzed by the statistical instrument Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 11.0.

Results

The result showed that the top three well performed coaching behavior were “exhibits self-discipline” ($M = 4.77$); “deal with athletes in positive manner” ($M = 4.77$), and “follow the class instruction of association” ($M = 4.73$). However, “corrective feedback” ($M = 3.77$), “coach decision” ($M = 3.77$) and “provide positive feedback to athletes” ($M = 3.55$) were the bottom three coaching behavior. The 2X3 (Gender and Course Level) ANOVA revealed that there were no significant mean differences in gender on the 18 items of the CEO, $F(1,16) < 4.49$, $p > .05$. Nonetheless, there were significant mean differences on Course Level regarding to the “knowledge of sports” $F(2,16)=10.55$, $p < .05$, and “corrective feedback” $F(2,16)=6.510$, $p < .05$. Post Hoc Tukey test showed that coaches who taught the elite courses received a significantly higher score in the “knowledge of sports” and “corrective feedback” than in the development and intermediate courses.

Discussions

In this study, MST was successfully applied in evaluating coaches in the NSA. The MST provided the researcher to assume the role of as a mystery evaluator and took the advantage of discovering the missing opportunities to improve the coaching performance of the NSA. The results of this study provided a detail and comprehensive feedback to the NSA and ensured that coaches’ performance was fulfilling the organization’s mission, vision, and values so as to enhance the image of the NSA. The NSA adopted the CEO checklist and the MST developed in this study as one of the key evaluation methods for the NSA. The results from this study also provided benchmark criteria for the NSA to recognize and reward coaching staff for excellent performance. A coaching workshop was further developed by the NSA based on the result of this study. In conclusion, mystery shopping is a good way to measure service quality. It might help sport and recreation organizations to gain insight in the human resource management and strengthen their further development.