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The Perceived Importance of Sport Management Competencies by Academics and Practitioners in the Cultural/Industrial Context of Taiwan

Managing Leisure: and International Journal (forthcoming)

Authors

Ling-Mei Ko *(Corresponding Author)*
Department of Leisure, Recreation and Tourism Management
Southern Taiwan University
1 Nan-Tai St., Yung-Kang City, Tainan County,
Taiwan

Ian Henry
Centre for Olympic Studies and Research
School of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Loughborough University
Loughborough LE11 3TU
United Kingdom

Joe Chin-Hsung Kao
Department of Leisure and Recreation Industry Management
National Taiwan Sport University
250 Wen Hua 1st Rd., Taoyuan
Taiwan

Abstract

The study of management competencies and their application in the field of sport management has an established tradition. It is only relatively recently however that concern to consider the culturally specific context of competency evaluation has developed in the mainstream management literature and little work has been developed in the sport management field to address cultural specificity in respect of competencies. In addition the distinction between those competencies valued by sport management educators and by sport management practitioners is a relatively neglected topic. This study evaluates the perceptions of the critical competencies required of sport managers in Taiwan developing and applying a locally based tool for evaluation of competencies in sport management, and in particular evaluates the differences between the perceptions of sport management academics and practitioners in Taiwan. The results of this study highlight cultural differences between the Taiwanese and other cultural contexts in terms of the perceived importance of particular competencies, and have implications for sport management professional development and training.

Introduction

Growing demand for sport has called for greater professional competencies in sport managers in Taiwan. Thus, sport management is a field that is expanding, both in terms of employment potential and in the proliferation of academic preparation programs. Although the first formal sport management degree only appeared in 1995, there are now 86 sport and leisure related programs currently offered in Taiwan. However, one of the problems facing the emerging field of sport management in Taiwan is the validity of sport management curricula, and their ability to produce competent sport managers to serve the needs of the sport industry. A standard approach to the development of education and training in sport management has been the identification of requisite competencies. However, little work has been undertaken in identifying competencies in culturally specific contexts, let alone in the culturally specific context of Taiwan. In addition, it is recognized that neither academics nor practitioners, working alone, can shape the field of sport management. The aims of this study are therefore: (a) to develop a research instrument specific to the Taiwan context which can establish the significance of particular management competencies to Taiwanese sport managers and educators; (b) to subsequently investigate the perceptions of sport managers and academics of the importance of competencies to the successful conducting of a sport manager's job in the context of the developing Taiwanese sport industry (and by implication to identify culturally specific competencies); and (c) to identify and explain any significant differences between the competencies identified by the managers and by the educators..

Research Strategy

The research strategy adopted in this study is thus intended to contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the sport management context in Taiwan. The research consisted of four phases, namely, phase 1: systematic review of the literature on competence-based analyses of management in the sport sector, phase 2: instrument development, the development of a culturally specific set of instruments, phase 3: questionnaire, and phase 4: analysis of findings.

This study is innovative in respect of applying the 'systematic review technique' to review the literature on competency-based studies in sport management. For a full description of the systematic review protocol see Transfield, et al. (2003), and for the procedures adopted in this case see Ko (2007). The systematic review was employed because it provides a systematic, transparent, and replicable audit trail of decision making and procedures through the reviewing process (Tranfield, et al., 2003). From the development of this systematic review we were able to identify and reflect on two key themes. The first was to summarize the range, type and frequency of skills and competencies identified as significant in a culturally varied set of contexts. The second was the identification of the cultural context per se of the competency research conducted. More details is provided in the following section.

Within phase 2, an appropriate instrument was developed for the evaluation of the perceptions of important competencies of a sport manager in Taiwan. In order to establish reliability and validity of the instrument, the initial items on the instrument were carefully selected through a multiple methods approach which crosschecked

accounts both provided by the secondary sources (systematic review of relevant literatures and examination of Taiwan sports management curricula) and primary interviews (organized around three rounds employing a Delphi approach). In addition, the instrument was pre-tested by domain knowledge experts to ensure adequate content validity (F. D. Davis, 1989; Litwin, 1995).

In phase 3, the instrument developed in phase 2 was utilized for a survey to examine the perceptions of the critical competencies of a sports manager and in particular differences between sports management academics and practitioners in Taiwan. A questionnaire was mailed to academics and practitioners in the sport service industry in Taiwan. Finally, the results and findings obtained from the data analysis were subject to analysis for their implications in relation to sport management in Taiwan in phase 4.

Phase 1: The Findings of the Systematic Review

The studies reviewed in the systematic review present several points of interest. First of all, the term 'competency' has been defined in a variety of ways in the literature. In general, the term competency implies that an individual must have a specific ability or capability needed to perform a particular job effectively (Frisby, 2005; Tungjaroenchai, 2000). A competency consists of two elements which are "the actual performance of a required skill" and "the personal attributes which underline such performance" (Birkhead, Sutherland, & Maxwell, 2000: 99). Hurd and Mclean (2004: 96) claim that Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) define competencies as "essential skills, knowledge and personal characteristics needed for successful performance in a job".

Pickett (1998: 104) stresses “competencies are the sum of one’s experiences and the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes one has acquired during the lifetime”. Drawing on such approaches, for the purposes of this study competency is defined as ‘the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal traits which are utilized to perform a variety of activities and behaviors effectively’. The definition thus focuses on skills and knowledge rather more than the more tenuous concerns with attitude.

Competency studies which aim to determine the knowledge and skills needed to perform a job, have been a major research area in sport management and have received attention from a wide range of scholars (Afthinos, 1993; Barcelona & Ross, 2004; Case & Branch, 2003; Chen, 1993; Cheng, 1993; Coalter, Potter, & MuNulty, 1990; Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; K. A. Davis, 1987; Ellard, 1985; Farmer, 1989; Hatfield, Wrenn, & Bretting, 1987; Horch & Schuette, 2003; Irwin, Cotter, Jenson, & White, Spring 1994- Summer 1995; L. Jamieson, 1980; Jennings, 1984; Kim, 1997; Lambrecht, 1987; NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Parks & Quain, 1986; Peng, 2000; Skipper, 1990; Tait, Richins, & Hanlon, 1993; Toh, 1997). Despite the volume of research activity in this area of study, researchers have stressed the importance of constant evaluation of the competencies needed to perform effectively in the sport industry due to the rapidly changing social environment (Lambrecht, 1987; Toh, 1997). Furthermore, a number of researchers have reported significant perception gaps between sports managers and academics with regards to those competencies which are critical to the successful performance of a sports manager’s job (Barcelona & Ross, 2004; Ellard, 1985; Jennings, 1984). Thus, with the rapidly growing sport services industry in Taiwan, there was a need for a study to identify and explain the significance of the

gaps between these two groups.

Moreover, it can be argued that most previous studies have suffered from two main limitations. First, such studies mainly focused on particular industry settings neglecting an understanding of generalizable competencies to perform a sport management role across a wide range of settings (which is a concern of many academics whose 'products' operate in a diverse range of sport industry settings), such as sport clubs (K. A. Davis, 1987; Horch & Schuette, 2003; Lambrecht, 1987), sport centers (Kim, 1997), sport facility settings (Case & Branch, 2003; Skipper, 1990) and sport events (Peng, 2000). Although Barcelona and Ross (2004) argued that sport management professionals working in different settings often require different skills and knowledge, other researchers have argued that sport managers must possess generalized skills to be able to adapt to many types of settings (L. M. Jamieson, 1991; Lambrecht, 1987). Moreover, sport management programs are often not intended to prepare their students only for a particular sport setting although we do see some evidence of increasing specialization (in for example the UK with the emergence of sport event management, and sport development degrees). Instead, sport management curricula tend to be designed to educate students with necessary competencies to perform a sport management role in a variety of managerial settings to avoid over-specialization which might limit the potential of a course to attract students.

The second limitation is that the findings of such studies may be culturally specific. Cross-cultural research in understanding the similarities and differences between

Eastern and Western cultures have demonstrated clearly that cultural values shape individual's perceptions and business behaviors (Ralston et al., 1992; Zandpour, Change, & Catalano, 1992). In addition, there is evidence to suggest a direct connection between culture and managerial competencies. A number of studies indicate a difference between the assessed competencies of managers from the different nationalities that are attributed to cultural difference (Boutet, Milsom, & Mercer, 2000; Chong, 2008). However, while there have been many studies investigating the perceptions of important competencies of a sport manager, there have been none to date that specifically look at studies in relation to national/local context. Culture and context will be significant in respect of what competencies are required and what competencies are perceived as important by practitioners and academics. In an examination of 24 competency-based studies in English on sport management, we are able to assess the cultural differences examined in a range of context, for example, in two studies conducted to identify the competencies needed to manage sport clubs in Germany and the US, results may be compared to consider cultural and other differences. Sports skill while considered as an important competency in the US, was not significant in Germany (Horch & Schuette, 2003; Lambrecht, 1987). The findings support the notion that for these 24 studies at least, the importance of competencies is perceived differently in different local contexts and thus locally based analysis is necessary to identify culturally specific features. However, given the claimed importance of the local context, it was significant that there was no comprehensive study found in the literature search for this study which identified the critical competencies of sport managers in the specific context of Taiwan.

Taiwanese culture differs from Western cultures in many respects. If we take culture to refer to "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." (Hofstede, 1984: 51) it is clear that a society's culture(s) will have an impact on the nature of business activity, including the skills and competencies required to engage with the symbolic systems of meanings and values within any given society. Thus, generalizing about the competencies required in management positions for an industry without recourse to some cultural contextualisation will provide limited insights. Although aspects of globalization have impinged on local business cultures it is not the case that forms of cultural homogeneity have developed whether in sport (Amara & Henry, 2004) or in other spheres (Busch, 2000). Indeed as Robertson's (1992) adoption of the term 'glocalisation' implies, local cultures mediate global forces developing local phenomena which reflect the local response to the global.

However, though one might suggest that local context may imply cultural difference, it should be recognized that there are major differences within (national) cultures and that generalizing (about national or Western cultures for example) should be undertaken with important caveats when referring to such claims (McSweeney, 2002) Perhaps the best known attempt to explore cultural differences comes from Hofstede (1980) who distinguished five cultural dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity and Long-term Orientation. The Taiwanese culture is found to be relatively high on Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, very high on Long-term Orientation but low on Individualism, and relatively low on

Masculinity compared to other countries (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). But how does Hofstede's account compare with that of local commentators analysis of local business culture? Commentators on the local business environment have tended to highlight three key features in particular which, in combination, distinguish Taiwanese business culture. These are Confucianism (Chan, 2008; Lu, Rose, & Blodgett, 1999; Tan & Chow, 2009), guanxi relations (Ai, 2006; Chou, Cheng, Huang, & Cheng, 2006), and attitudes to political nationalism (T. Y. Wang & Chang, 2005). Notably, Hofestede's cultural dimensions of low Individualism and Masculinity, and high Uncertainty Avoidance have a close interdependence with the concept of guanxi.

The values and philosophies of Confucianism have traditionally had a profound influence on individual behaviour and the nature of business culture in Taiwan (Chan, 2008; Lu, et al., 1999; Tan & Chow, 2009). Genzberger (1994: 157) highlights that "the basic tenets of Confucian thought are obedience and respect for superiors and parents, duty to family, loyalty to friends, humility, sincerity, and courtesy". Taiwanese business has strong hierarchical and family influences, which emphasize relationships within society and clear orders of seniority and status. The concept of relationship is understood as "guanxi", a term indicating the personalised networks of influence, which is central to business success in Taiwan (Ai, 2006; Chou, et al., 2006).

In addition, Taiwan is undergoing both a process of nation building and a phase of democratic consolidation (T. Y. Wang & Chang, 2005). However, the unique history and unresolved relationship between Taiwan and China has resulted in a complex environment. First, the issue of national identity has separated the Taiwanese into

different political camps and resulted in significant political turmoil. In Taiwan, the Kuomintang Party (KMT) is commonly considered as standing for promoting some forms of unification with China and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as promoting Taiwan's independence. This is a fault line running through Taiwanese society. Second, Taiwan has struggled when seeking participation in the inter-governmental activities of the international community because of China's obstructive tactics. However, although the political relations are sensitive between Taiwan and China, economic relations between Taiwan and China are burgeoning, in particular expanded cross-Strait charter flights are moving ahead and there seems likely to be a significant increase in Chinese tourists to Taiwan in the near future. The level of Taiwanese investment in China has grown significantly following Deng Xiao Ping's introduction in 1979 of the policy of opening up of the Chinese economy.

Given this context, it was recognised that an important feature of this study would be the need to develop a valid and reliable instrument specific to the context of Taiwan to evaluate the perceptions of sports managers and academics of the importance of competencies of sports managers. This is important not only in prescriptive terms for the further development and improvement of sport management in Taiwan, but also in analytic / heuristic terms for further investigation of whether cultural differences exist in relation to competencies valued in the field of sport management more broadly.

Phase 2: Instrument Development

The questionnaire developed contained two major parts, the importance of

competency statements to be evaluated and demographic information requested. Three approaches were used to generate competency items for evaluation. First, the examination of previous competency studies in sport management in the systematic review process was able to develop a generic list of competencies (Afthinos, 1993; Barcelona & Ross, 2004; Case & Branch, 2003; Chen, 1993; Cheng, 1993; Coalter, et al., 1990; Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; K. A. Davis, 1987; Ellard, 1985; Farmer, 1989; Hatfield, et al., 1987; Horch & Schuette, 2003; Irwin, et al., Spring 1994- Summer 1995; L. Jamieson, 1980; Jennings, 1984; Kim, 1997; Lambrecht, 1987; NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Parks & Quain, 1986; Peng, 2000; Skipper, 1990; Tait, et al., 1993; Toh, 1997). In addition, this study adopted two further approaches in order to generate items related specifically to Taiwan's cultural context. One was an examination of curricula provided by 13 higher education institutions in Taiwan providing sport management programs with the aim to map out the aspects of the structural context of what programs were provided by sport management departments within the Taiwan context. This allowed us to gain a clearer understanding of what competencies are emphasized by sport management departments in Taiwan.

The other approach was a three-round Delphi study conducted in Taiwan in order to determine and evaluate the perceptions of required competencies for the successful conducting of a Taiwanese sport manager's job. The Taiwan Society of Sport Management (TASSM), the most important professional organization in the Taiwan sport management field, was invited to collaborate as a partner in this Delphi project which assisted in the identification of 27 willing expert participants for the study who were key stakeholders in the profession. Finally, all items collected from three

approaches were examined, combined and refined into a list of 74 sport management competencies, with each competency, accompanied by a clear description.

In order to validate the instrument, the initial draft of the survey was pre-tested by 16 sport management academic experts to provide adequate content validity. Modifications made to the questionnaire were based upon feedback from the experts, and the preliminary pool of 74 competencies was reduced to 70 because some items identified as ambiguous or vague were combined or deleted. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of competencies using a seven point Likert scale, where 1 = not important at all; 2 = very unimportant; 3 = slightly unimportant; 4 = neutral; 5 = slightly important; 6 = very important; 7 = extremely important. In addition, demographic information was gathered regarding, gender, age, nature and type of work, and academic qualifications.

Phase 3: Questionnaire

Sample Selection

The self-administered questionnaires were then mailed to a sample of 800 individuals which included 150 academics who currently teach sport management related courses and 650 sport managers working in the sport services industry. Since the sport industry in Taiwan is still, in relative terms, in its infancy, to date no widely accepted classification of the Taiwan sport industry has been developed by scholars and practitioners in sport management, and government classifications remain relatively crude. This study thus proposes a structure of the Taiwan sport industry

based on an adapted version of the sport industry structure suggested by Gratton and Taylor (2000) consisting of the sport goods sector and the sport services sector, which amalgamates aspects of the classification developed by scholars and government in Taiwan. The sport goods sectors consist of sport goods manufacturing industry and sports goods distribution industry. The sport services sectors include participant sport services industry, spectator sport services industry, sport mass media industry, and sport promotion industry. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were assured that their individual responses would be treated as confidential.

In order to improve the return rate, two follow-up mails or phone calls were made to hasten responses. Of the 211 returned questionnaires, six invalid responses were discarded. The remaining 205 valid responses were then coded for statistical analysis having a response rate of 25.6%. The return rate for the academics in the sample was reasonable at 55.3% (n=83). In relation to the industry based managers, the sample size in absolute terms was bigger (n=122), but in relative terms was disappointing (18.8%) and caution should therefore be exercised in claims for generalisability. However for the purpose of this exploratory study, employing exploratory factor analysis, the results obtained are employed to suggest indicative findings. Thus the sample included 122 (59.5%) sport managers and 83 (40.5%) academics, and three-quarters of the total sample were male. Demographic data for the participations is summarised in Table 1 including gender, age and academic achievement. Sport managers were from the following sectors of the sport services industry: participant sport services industry (n=31, 15.1% of the total sample), spectator sport services

industry (n=32, 15.6% of the total sample), sport mass media industry (n=17, 8.3% of the total sample), sport promotion industry (n=38, 18.5% of the total sample), and others (n=4, 2.0% of the total sample).

Table 1. Demographic Data

	Academics		Practitioners		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gender						
Male	65	78.3%	86	70.5%	151	73.7%
Female	18	21.7%	36	29.5%	54	26.3%
Total	83	100.0%	122	100.0%	205	100.0%
Age						
20~29	0	0%	5	4.1%	5	2.4%
30~39	30	36.1%	30	24.6%	60	29.3%
40~49	35	42.2%	47	38.5%	82	40.0%
50~59	16	19.3%	33	27.1%	49	23.9%
Over 60	2	2.4%	7	5.7%	9	4.4%
Total	83	100.0%	122	100.0%	205	100.0%
Academic Achievement						
Bachelor's Degree	12	14.5%	77	63.1%	89	43.4%
Master's Degree	26	31.3%	29	23.8%	55	26.8%
Doctoral Degree	45	54.2%	5	4.1%	50	24.4%
Others	0	0%	11	9.0%	11	5.4%
Total	83	100.0%	122	100.0%	205	100.0%

Data Analysis and Results

The competency instrument administered in this study was developed without a hypothesis about the number of factors necessary to explain the interrelationship among competencies beforehand. Exploratory factor analysis methodology was employed for the purpose of determining the underlying factor structure that was present for these 70 competencies in the sample. The 205 responses were examined using principal component factor analysis as the extraction technique, and varimax as the orthogonal rotation method. To derive a stable factor structure, three commonly employed decision rules were applied to eliminate items: (1) with an eigenvalue less than 1; (2) loadings of less than 0.45 on all scale factors; (3) loadings greater than

0.45 on two or more scale factors. Factor analysis evaluation and scale elimination were repeated until the factor structure remained stable. Three iterations following the decision rule eliminated fifteen items of low factor loadings and yielded a stable set of twelve factors including 55 competencies. Although twelve factors were extracted from factor analysis, there was a factor having only one item which should be ignored. Researchers claim that if the factors extracted were to describe common characteristics of variables, then, by definition, each extracted factor should have at least two or more items (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003; Segars, 1997). As a result, a total of eleven factors consisting of 54 competencies were produced from the factor analysis.

These eleven factors were examined and given names based on the domain ideas captured from competency items grouped in that particular factor. These eleven factors explained 64.11% of the variance in the data set as shown in Table 2. In addition, the internal consistency of the scale was calculated using Cronbach alpha coefficients. These factors were (F1) Management Techniques (14 items, α=0.92), (F2) Sport-Related Theory and Foundations (9 items, α=0.89), (F3) Service Provision and Development (5 items, α=0.84), (F4) Foreign Language and Learning Ability (4 items, α=0.76), (F5) Leadership (4 items, α=0.73), (F6) Finance, Economics and Analytic Abilities (4 items, α=0.73), (F7) Communication (3 items, α=0.69), (F8) Political Awareness (4 items, α=0.80), (F9) Accounting and Risk Management (2 items, α=0.62), (F10) Information Management and Technology (2 items, α=0.73), (F11) Management Theory and Knowledge Management (3 items, α=0.69). Robinson et al. (1991) propose that an acceptable level for Cronbach's α of 0.60 is sufficient,

particularly for developmental studies. In this study, the data reliability could be assured because the α-values for the eleven factors were all greater than 0.6.

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Competencies

Factor Number and Name		No. of Items	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %	*Cronbach's α*
F1	Management Techniques	14	17.42	31.67	31.67	0.92
F2	Sports-Related Theory and Foundations	9	3.97	7.22	38.88	0.89
F3	Service Provision and Development	5	2.24	4.07	42.95	0.84
F4	Foreign Language and Learning Ability	4	2.15	3.91	46.86	0.76
F5	Leadership	4	1.68	3.06	49.92	0.73
F6	Finance, Economics and Analytic Abilities	4	1.49	2.72	52.63	0.73
F7	Communication	3	1.37	2.49	55.12	0.69
F8	Political Awareness	4	1.35	2.46	57.58	0.80
F9	Accounting and Risk Management	2	1.33	2.41	60.00	0.62
F10	Information Management and Technology	2	1.17	2.12	62.12	0.73
F11	Management Theory and Knowledge Management	3	1.10	1.99	64.11	0.69

The descriptive statistics of the factors are presented in Table 3. The importance of the 11 factors was ranked with the highest mean ranked first. Academics and practitioners had nearly the same ranking of factors except that academics placed more emphasis on foreign language and learning ability, and accounting and risk management than did practitioners. Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient (rs) was utilized to measure how closely two sets of rankings agree with each other. A significant association between the sets of rankings (rs=0.955, $P<0.001$) indicates that there is no evidence to suggest the two rankings differ significantly between two groups' assessments.

While the ranking of factors showed no significant differences between the two groups, there was a significant difference in the size of some of the means. The result of one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analysis shown in Table 4

revealed that there was a significant difference between academics and practitioners regarding the importance of all competency factors (F=3.129, P<0.001). One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analysis was applied to highlight which of the individual dependent factors were contributing to the significant overall result.

Table 3. Importance of 11 Factors

Factor Variables		Mean Value (Rank)		
		All	Academics	Practitioners
F 1	Management Techniques	6.08 (1)	6.11 (3)	6.05 (1)
F 5	Leadership	6.02 (2)	6.13 (2)	5.94 (2)
F 4	Foreign Language and Learning Ability	5.95 (3)	6.17 (1)	5.80 (3)
F 7	Communication	5.80 (4)	5.87 (4)	5.75 (4)
F 11	Management Theory and Knowledge Management	5.68 (5)	5.82 (5)	5.58 (5)
F 3	Service Provision and Development	5.56 (6)	5.71 (6)	5.46 (6)
F 10	Information Management and Technology	5.50 (7)	5.58 (7)	5.44 (7)
F 9	Accounting and Risk Management	5.35 (8)	5.51 (8)	5.24 (9)
F 6	Finance, Economics and Analytic Abilities	5.28 (9)	5.30 (9)	5.28 (8)
F 2	Sports-Related Theory and Foundations	5.14 (10)	5.23 (10-11)	5.07 (10)
F 8	Political Awareness	5.01 (11)	5.23 (10-11)	4.86 (11)

7-point Likert Scale: 1 (not important at all) – 7 (extremely important)

Table 4. One-way MANOVA for Eleven Factors between Academics and Practitioners

Effect	Wilks' Lambda	*F* statistics	Sig. Level
Academic and Practitioner Groups	0.849	3.129	0.001***

****P* < 0.001

The one-way ANOVA (effectively a T-test) result shown in Table 5 indicated that the perception of the importance of competency factors was significantly different between academics and practitioners (P < 0.05) in five factors: service provision and development, foreign language and learning ability, political awareness, accounting and risk management, and management theory and knowledge management.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA for the Differences between Groups in Each Factor

Competency Factor		Academics			Practitioners			*F* statistics	Sig.
		Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD		
F1:	Management Techniques	**3**	6.11	0.59	**1**	6.05	0.55	0.55	0.458[n.s.]
F2:	Sports Related Theory and Foundations	**10-11**	5.23	0.72	**10**	5.07	0.70	2.47	0.118[n.s.]
F3:	Service Provision and Development	**6**	5.71	0.68	**6**	5.46	0.72	6.32	0.013*
F4:	Foreign Language and Learning Ability	**1**	6.17	0.64	**3**	5.80	0.63	16.19	0.000***
F5:	Leadership	**2**	6.13	0.63	**2**	5.94	0.70	3.70	0.056[n.s.]
F6:	Finance, Economics and Analytic Abilities	**9**	5.30	0.79	**8**	5.28	0.72	0.03	0.862[n.s.]
F7:	Communication	**4**	5.87	0.61	**4**	5.75	0.68	1.49	0.224[n.s.]
F8:	Political Awareness	**10-11**	5.23	0.97	**11**	4.86	0.81	8.43	0.004**
F9:	Accounting and Risk Management	**8**	5.51	0.78	**9**	5.24	0.76	6.10	0.014*
F10:	Information Management and Technology	**7**	5.58	0.85	**7**	5.44	0.73	1.62	0.204[n.s.]
F11:	Management Theory and Knowledge Management	**5**	5.82	0.69	**5**	5.58	0.71	5.37	0.021*

7-point Likert Scale: 1 (not important at all) – 7 (extremely important)

***$P < 0.001$

**$P < 0.01$

*$P < 0.05$

n.s.= non significant

Phase 4: Analysis of Findings

From the questionnaire responses and subsequent factor analysis, MANOVA and ANOVA , two main findings may be emphasized. First, in terms of the perceptions of competencies critical to the successful conducting of a sport manager's job, it is perceived by academics and practitioners as important that a sport manager should have the following competencies in order to perform his or her work successfully: management techniques, sport-related theory and foundations, service provision and development, foreign language and learning ability, leadership, finance, economics and analytic abilities, communication, political awareness, accounting and risk management, information technology, and management theory and knowledge management. Moreover, the competency factors identified in this study converged

with most findings of other research studies (Afthinos, 1993; Barcelona & Ross, 2004; Case & Branch, 2003; Chen, 1993; Cheng, 1993; Coalter, et al., 1990; Cuskelly & Auld, 1991; K. A. Davis, 1987; Ellard, 1985; Farmer, 1989; Hatfield, et al., 1987; Horch & Schuette, 2003; Irwin, et al., Spring 1994- Summer 1995; L. Jamieson, 1980; Jennings, 1984; Kim, 1997; Lambrecht, 1987; NASPE-NASSM, 1993; Parks & Quain, 1986; Peng, 2000; Skipper, 1990; Tait, et al., 1993; Toh, 1997).

However, there was a lack of convergence between this study and others on three competency categories which were foreign language and learning ability, political awareness, and management theory and knowledge management. The likely explanation is that cultural differences exist in relation to competencies valued. Although a list of competencies was initially obtained from the systematic review, this list suffered from a deficiency in respect of the cultural context of most such studies. In order to address such concerns, the instrument was developed not only through reviewing the literature, but also through conducting a Delphi survey and examining sport management curricula in the context of Taiwan. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the factors identified in this study were different from studies conducted in other cultural contexts.

What is the significance of these differences? At least two of these categories (foreign language competence, and political awareness) can be readily explained by reference to the recent historical context of Taiwan and the relationship of its business culture to the political realities of contemporary Taiwan. First the significance of Taiwan's rapidly expanding business links with China means that in addition to a command of

English as a significant business language, a knowledge of Mandarin is highly desirable. Second, the particular nature of party politics and its relationship to civil society in Taiwan is an important factor in understanding the nature of business in the Taiwan context. The political division between the major political parties, the KMT and the DPP in Taiwan represents more than simply party support. Political clientelism has been an endemic feature of social relations (particularly business relations) in Taiwan since the arrival of the KMT in 1949 (Chun, 2000; Hsieh, 2000; F. Wang, 1994). An understanding of political context, not just in relation to China-Taiwan relationships but also in respect of the internal political order in Taiwan, is a critical competence. A third competency, 'management theory and knowledge management', which emerges in the factor analysis, but which is not an area of competence identified in other national contexts, is perhaps more difficult to explain by reference to local context. Here the explanation may be a function of the timing of the study. Knowledge management is a relatively recent emphasis in the management literature and this may explain its emergence in this study, the fieldwork for which was conducted in 2006.

A second major finding was that the perceptional difference between sport management academics and practitioners on the importance of which competencies are critical to managerial effectiveness has been found. This finding was consistent with several previous studies (Barcelona & Ross, 2004; Ellard, 1985; Jennings, 1984), but not supported by others (L. Jamieson, 1980; Peng, 2000). The result of one-way ANOVA revealed the academic group and the practitioner group perceived the importance of five competency factors differently which were service provision and

development, foreign language and learning ability, political awareness, accounting and risk management, and management theory and knowledge management. One interesting finding was that academics perceived the importance of the competency of foreign language and learning ability and political awareness significantly higher than that of practitioners. A possible explanation for this interesting finding may be that the academics recognize that opportunities exist for the Taiwan sport industry to expand its business to China or even other countries. The opportunities rely on the fact that barriers to international exchange have been reduced because global reformation has transformed the world's political, economic, and cultural climates. A sport manager, therefore, should have the competencies of language and political awareness in order to compete in a global market. This is supported by Masteralexis and McDonald (1997) who stress that sport managers will be required to overcome language and cultural differences to compete in a global market. However, practitioners might be more conservative about this opportunity in the near future because the sport industry is still in the early growth stage in Taiwan and they may therefore prefer to concentrate their business in the domestic market.

In addition, it came as no surprise to find that academics gave more weight to management theory and knowledge management than practitioners. Support for this view was found in the work done by Weese (1995) who claimed that academics placed too much emphasis on the theoretical perspectives of sport management and neglected the needs of the sport industry.

Another interesting finding was that the academics were more likely to rate the

competencies related to service provision and development higher than the practitioners. The fact the academics placed more emphasis on these competencies than practitioners could be explained by an increased emphasis on service offers within sport management programmes. In addition, practitioners tended to place less emphasis on the competency of accounting and risk management. This may be explained by the fact that a sport manager might not see a need for expertise in accounting per se because he or she may not need to undertake formal accounting activities (as opposed to general financial management functions) and may not have been required to undertake directly forms of work in which formal accounting was addressed. Consequently, a practitioner may well rate the competency of accounting and risk management lower than other areas with which he or she had greater familiarity.

However, although a difference between sport managers' and academics' perceptions was found in this study, it did not appear to result from the absence of a shared vision. Instead, in terms of the rank order of factors there was good evidence to suggest strong agreement between academics and sport managers in the ranking of importance of competencies by calculating Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient. Furthermore, each of the 11 factors received a mean score above 4.0 based on a 7-point Likert scale (with 7: extremely important and 4: neutral), and this indicates that none of these competencies were perceived as unimportant by respondents. Thus, these results suggest that although a difference in perception between sport managers and academics on the relative importance of the competencies has been found, the differences reflect differences in degree of

perceived importance rather than polarized views.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the perceived competencies critical to the successful conducting of a sport manager's job in Taiwan were identified including management techniques, sport-related theory and foundations, service provision and development, foreign language and learning ability, leadership, finance, economics and analytic abilities, communication, political awareness, accounting and risk management, information management and technology, management theory and knowledge management. This study also demonstrated the need to consider the context-specific nature of competency studies in the sport management field. For example, of the eleven competency areas identified in this research, three of the competency categories are not evident in other studies in contrasting national contexts. These were political awareness, foreign language and learning ability, management theory and knowledge management.

It also revealed differences of perceptions of importance of competencies between academics and practitioners. However, the results suggested that the difference only indicated a difference in the extent of perceived importance rather than a substantive difference in the direction of preference, or the rank order of preference. In addition, the focus of this study is on generic skills to perform a sport management role across a wide range of settings which excludes the possibility that the difference in perception is attributed to the different sport industry settings. Thus, analysis of more specific job categories may suggest additional and/or different competence

priorities.

The finding of 11 competency factors is of value to those concerned with sport management professional education and training. Sport management academics targeting generic sport management education can use the 11 competency factors to inform the process of curriculum design or the modification of existing curricula in a more integrated and competency-based educational program. On the other hand, sport management practitioners who wish to use sport management competencies to inform human resource management practice might also use the competencies perceived as important as a guideline in recruitment, training, career management and succession planning. However, although such a consensus points to the types of competences required across a range of sport management roles, it is nevertheless the case that specialist management activity (e.g. in the health and fitness club sector) may require some specialist knowledge (e.g. with regard to exercise physiology). This is an issue which points the way toward further work required to develop an understanding of core competences in such differing sport specialist contexts.

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