

LEVEL OF ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE IMPORTANCE ATTRIBUTED AND PERCEIVED COMPETENCE OF SPORTS COACHES

Ema Maria Egerland

Universidade Regional de Blumenau, Blumenau, Santa Catarina, Brasil

Juarez Vieira do Nascimento

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil

Jorge Both

Secretaria Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil

Abstract

The aim of this study was to verify the level of association between the Importance Attributed to the competences and the professional Competence Perceived of sports coaches from the State of Santa Catarina. 213 coaches who work with individual and team modalities participated in the investigation. For data collection modified and adapted versions of the Scale of Self-Perception of Competence were used. Chi-square test for single groups and Spearman's correlation tests were used for statistical data analysis. Besides confirming the constructs of investigated dimensions, the evidence found allowed for the identification of some professional potentialities and professional needs, Professional Knowledge of Theory and Methodology of Sportive Training standing out.

Keywords: Professional Competences - Perceived Competence - Coaches

Introduction

Ever since the beginning of times, mankind has built and accumulated knowledge that allowed it to change reality, and its changes have never been so intense and fast as today. Whereas they enjoy facilities offered by technological advances, professionals from all areas need to constantly refine their skills to face the high competitiveness of the labor market. The sports area is no different, requiring the coach to make use of all resources available to obtain a good performance.

Intervention in sports teams is no longer restricted to the preparation and security of athletes, requiring mastery of concepts from different areas from coaches, as well as skills and attitudes to assist in the formation of human beings and to perform research and

management activities. In addition, professional training is an activity that requires versatility, particularly in managing the multiplicity of tasks that involve different dimensions (MEINBERG, 2002a).

When commenting on the coach's role in sports development, Moreno and Del Villar (2004) and Pascual et al. (2006) point out that these professionals must have an academic and professional background, having a reflective and critical character about their practice, a deep conviction of the validity of collective work, and ability to adapt to advances in knowledge, technical, and professional knowledge in sports training.

The success of coaches also depends on their philosophy of life and work, which determines their beliefs and principles that guide their actions. Not only does the philosophy adopted determine the appropriate use of knowledge, but also marks the coach's style and goals (BOMPA, 2002a; MARTENS, 2002; SAMULSKI. MORAIS, 1999). Research with high-performance coaches by Ramirez (2002) showed the adoption of a philosophy of training that is dynamic, open, and liable to changes, which was necessarily related to the coaches' life style.

Although the development of skills is an ongoing process that varies among individuals (MATEOZO, 1971), the labor market has required competent professionals with constant training and professional development (ALCOSER, 2006). While team sports coaches often need to master skills in the conceptual, communicative, technical, personal relation, and moral-ethical fields (BALBINO, 2005; BALBINO; WINTERSTEIN, 2008; MEINBERG, 2002a, 2002b), individual sports coaches need a high creativity to make sessions varied and attractive (BOMPA, 2002b; LISITSKAYA, 1998).

In the literature researched (ARAUJO, 1997; LIMA, 1998; PRATA, 1998; ROSADO, 2000), it appears that one of the most important steps of the construction of the coaching career occurs when an individual expresses the wish to improve the effectiveness of training. In this stage, we also see the need for continued education to play a role in the development of the type in which the individual performs, as well as improve the effectiveness of their intervention. Another aspect found is the lack of studies that seek to address the potentialities and professional needs of coaches, based on the comparison between the importance attributed to skills and the level of perceived competence.

From this perspective, the purpose of this study was to verify the level of association between the importance attributed to skills and the Professional Competence perceived of sports coaches from Santa Catarina. This research is justified by the need to provide relevant data to the initial and ongoing training of coaches, as well as contribute to the implementation of the professional certification process of sports coaches

Methodological procedures

This study was characterized by descriptive correlational research as it was concerned about assessing the association between certain variables, not assuming a cause and effect relationship (THOMAS; NELSON, 2002).

The study population included all sports coaches from different sports working in Santa Catarina. Based on the selection process by region of the state of Santa Catarina, 213 coaches participated in the study, comprising 44 female individuals and 169 male individuals, from team and individual sports, linked to local sports foundations and high-performance sports, while 69 (32.4%) came from the Vale do Itajaí, 56 (26.3%) came from the West, 44 (20.7%) came from the North, and 44 (20.7%) came from Greater Florianópolis, South, and Plateau. The mesoregions Greater Florianópolis, South, and Plateau have been grouped due to small number of participants.

The data collection instruments were two questionnaires to evaluate the Self-Perception of Professional Competence and the Importance Attributed to skills by sports coaches.

The level of the perceived Professional Competence of the coaches was assessed based on the Scale of Self-perception of Competence (EAPC), which was adapted from the instrument developed by Simão (1998). The analytical framework is two-dimensional, consisting of the dimensions of Professional Knowledge (Sports Management and Legislation, Sports Biodynamics, Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, and Theory and Methodology of Sports Training) and Professional Skills (Sports Planning and Management, Sports Assessment, Sports Communication and Integration, and Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update). The instrument consists of 39 closed questions with a rating scale of perceived competence of 1 to 5 points, with 1 = I do not master it, 2 =

I master it little, 3 = I master it fairly, 4 = I master it well, and 5 = I master it very well.

Although the research instrument has been validated to the Portuguese reality by Simão (1998), it was necessary first to translate it and adapt it to the Brazilian reality, to test the clarity and objectivity of language and the reproducibility of the new version. Analysis of clarity and objectivity of the language was performed with 26 coaches, a process that resulted in the elimination of six questions, which did not exhibit the expected level of consensus (80%). Assessment of reproducibility of the instrument was made from the test-retest method with a week interval between assessments, involving 50 sports coaches. The results of the correlation coefficients were considered acceptable.

The modified version of the EAPC was used to assess the level of Importance Attributed to professional competences. The questionnaire was also composed of 39 closed questions, but with a rating scale of importance attributed of 1 to 5 points, with 1 = no importance, 2 = little importance, 3 = reasonable importance, 4 = great importance, and 5 = crucial importance.

After the project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Proceeding 337/08), the questionnaires and the terms of informed consent were forwarded to the Municipal Sport Foundations for distribution to the coaches of each municipality.

The tabulation and categorization of data relating to the variables of the study were performed in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. After the categorization performed by an adaptation of the balance equations of Lemos (2007), we used the chi-square test for a single group, with 50.0% as a reference for evaluating possible trends of responses from coaches and Spearman's correlation test to observe a linear correlation between the variables. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, version 11.0, the level of significance of which was 5%.

The correlation coefficients were classified as the cutoff points suggested by Mitra and Lankford (1999), which determine that correlations between 0.20 and 0.40 are considered weak, between 0.40 and 0.60 are considered moderate, and above 0.60 are considered strong. The values of correlation below 0.20 were considered very weak.

Results and discussion

The results showed that sports coaches have attributed high importance ($p < 0.001$) to indicators, dimensions, and Global Assessment of Professional Competences (Table 1). Whereas the lowest rates of Importance Attributed to skills were observed in Professional Management Knowledge and Sports Management and Legislation (80.3%), the higher percentages were found in the Professionals Knowledge of Theory and Methodology of Sports Training (98.1%).

Table 1: Level of Importance Attributed to Professional Competences by sports coaches from Santa Catarina

Dimensions and Indicators	Importance Attributed		p-value*
	Not Important	Important	
Professional Knowledge	23 (10.8%)	190 (89.2%)	<0.001
Sports Management	42 (19.7%)	171 (80.3%)	<0.001
Sports Biodynamics	16 (7.5%)	197 (92.5%)	<0.001
Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports	24 (11.3%)	189 (88.7%)	<0.001
Theory and Methodology of Sports Training	4 (1.9%)	209 (98.1%)	<0.001
Professional Skills	15 (7.0%)	198 (93.0%)	<0.001
Sports Planning and Management	10 (4.7%)	203 (95.3%)	<0.001
Sports Assessment	16 (7.5%)	197 (92.5%)	<0.001
Sports Communication and Integration	10 (4.7%)	203 (95.3%)	<0.001
Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update	32 (15.0%)	181 (85.0%)	<0.001
Overall Assessment of Importance Attributed	26 (12.2%)	187 (87.8%)	<0.001

*p-value estimated through the square-chi test for a single group (reference = 50.0%)

One aspect to note is that 9 of every 10 coaches attributed high importance to the dimensions of Professional Knowledge and Professional Skills. These results affect the Global Assessment of Importance Assigned variable, which showed rates similar to those reported in the two dimensions that make up its analytical framework.

As for the Self-perception of Professional Competence (Table 2), it was found that most coaches master the professional knowledge of Sports Management and Legislation, Sports Biodynamics, Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, and Theory and Methodology of Sports Training. In addition, the coaches assessed reported they mastered the Professional Skills for Sports Planning and Management, Sports Assessment, Sports Communication and Integration, and Sports Professional Self-reflection and Upgrade, which influenced the Overall Assessment of Perceived Competence ($p < 0.001$). It is noteworthy that the coaches had the lowest mastery of the (65.3%) indicator of the Sports Management and Legislation in

both constructs.

Table 2. Level of Professional Competence perceived by sports coaches from Santa Catarina

Dimensions and Indicators	Perceived Competence		p-value*
	Mastery	No Mastery	
Professional Knowledge	37 (17.4%)	176 (82.6%)	<0.001
Sports Management	74 (34.7%)	139 (65.3%)	<0.001
Sports Biodynamics	39 (18.3%)	174 (81.7%)	<0.001
Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports	26 (12.2%)	187 (87.8%)	<0.001
Theory and Methodology of Sports Training	9 (4.2%)	204 (95.8%)	<0.001
Professional Skills	21 (9.9%)	192 (90.1%)	<0.001
Sports Planning and Management	13 (6.1%)	200 (93.9%)	<0.001
Sports Assessment	26 (12.2%)	187 (87.8%)	<0.001
Sports Communication and Integration	14 (6.6%)	199 (93.4%)	<0.001
Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update	28 (13.1%)	185 (86.9%)	<0.001
Overall Assessment of Perceived Competence	39 (18.3%)	174 (81.7%)	<0.001

*p-value estimated through the square-chi test for a single group (reference = 50.0%)

When comparing the percentage results of variables Importance Attributed and Perceived Competence, it was found that only in the ability of Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update, sports coaches showed they mastered what they believed to be important as their ability to professional intervention. In other indicators, dimensions and overall ratings of both constructs, the coaches assessed always attributed greater importance to the field of Professional Competences.

With respect to rates of linear correlation between the indicators, the dimensions and the Overall Assessment of the Importance Attributed to Competences (Table 3), results showed lower levels of correlation between the indicators of the dimension Professional Skills (crossing with a very weak correlation, two crossings considered with weak correlation, and three crossings considered with moderate correlation), than that among indicators of the dimension Professional Skills (five crossings with moderate levels of correlation and one crossing with a strong correlation).

Table 3. Level of correlation between dimensions and the respective indicators of the Importance Attributed to Professional Competences by sports coaches from Santa Catarina.

Variables	L.1.1	L.1.2	L.1.3	L.1.4	L.2.1	L.2.2	L.2.3	L.2.4	D.1	D.2	General
L.1.1											
L.1.2	0.40**										
L.1.3	0.50**	0.35**									
L.1.4	0.19**	0.49**	0.39**								
L.2.1	0.39**	0.53**	0.48**	0.62**							
L.2.2	0.40**	0.68**	0.41**	0.49**	0.53**						
L.2.3	0.34**	0.53**	0.55**	0.62**	0.58**	0.61**					
L.2.4	0.45**	0.28**	0.47**	0.33**	0.47**	0.43**	0.40**				
D.1	0.66**	0.65**	0.74**	0.40**	0.57**	0.59**	0.57**	0.39**			
D.2	0.42**	0.48**	0.54**	0.50**	0.72**	0.76**	0.72**	0.60**	0.61**		
General	0.64**	0.60**	0.68**	0.37**	0.60**	0.66**	0.60**	0.57**	0.93**	0.74**	

Caption: * $p \leq 0.01$, ** $p \leq 0.001$. **L.1.1** – Sports Management and Legislation, **L.1.2** – Sports Biodynamics, **L.1.3** – Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, **L.1.4** – Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, **L.2.1** – Sports Planning and Management, **L.2.2** – Sports Assessment, **L.2.3** – Sports Communication and Integration, **L.2.4** – Sports Self-reflection and Update, **D.1** – Professional Knowledge, **D.2** – Professional Skills, **General** – Overall Assessment of Importance Attributed.

When analyzing crossings of the indicators of both dimensions that comprise the construct Importance Attributed to the competences, it was found that the majority of the associations was considered moderate (nine cases). It is noteworthy that a high correlation was only found in the crossing of the indicators of the skill Sports Assessment sports and the knowledge Sports Biodynamics (rs 0.66), as well as the crossings of dimensions Professional Knowledge and Professional Skills (rs 0.61).

In assessing the level of association between indicators with the respective dimensions, most indicators showed strong correlation in the dimension Professional Knowledge (Sports Management and Legislation, rs 0.66; Sport Biodynamics, rs 0.65; Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, rs 0.74), except in the indicator Theory and Methodology of Sports Training which showed moderate correlation (rs 0.40). In the dimension Professional Skills, it was observed that all indicators showed a strong association with the dimension, the levels of correlation of which ranged between rs 0.60 and rs 0.76.

One aspect to note is that most indicators (rs between 0.60 and 0.68) and both dimensions (rs 0.93 and rs 0.74, respectively) showed strong correlation with the Overall Assessment of the Importance Attributed, except the indicator of knowledge of the Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, which showed weak correlation (rs 0.37) and the indicator of the skill Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update, which showed moderate correlation (rs 0.57).

The levels of linear correlation between the indicators, dimensions, and Overall Assessment of Perceived Competence (Table 4) revealed that most associations between the indicators of the dimension Professional Skills was considered moderate (rs between 0.40 and 0.54). On the other hand, the indicators of the dimension Professional Skills associations tended to weak or very weak (rs below 0.20).

Table 4. Level of association between dimensions and the respective indicators of Professional Competence perceived by sports coaches from Santa Catarina.

Variables	L.1.1	L.1.2	L.1.3	L.1.4	L.2.1	L.2.2	L.2.3	L.2.4	D.1	D.2	General
L.1.1											
L.1.2	0.16**										
L.1.3	0.38**	0.19**									
L.1.4	0.24**	0.32**	0.42**								
L.2.1	0.27**	0.39**	0.38**	0.73**							
L.2.2	0.30**	0.38**	0.43**	0.49**	0.50**						
L.2.3	0.28**	0.27**	0.60**	0.60**	0.49**	0.38**					
L.2.4	0.42**	0.28**	0.58**	0.47**	0.45**	0.49**	0.40**				
D.1	0.52**	0.52**	0.71**	0.46**	0.45**	0.51**	0.43**	0.52**			
D.2	0.35**	0.37**	0.65**	0.64**	0.71**	0.74**	0.55**	0.71**	0.63**		
General	0.55**	0.50**	0.71**	0.44**	0.49**	0.57**	0.41**	0.53**	0.97**	0.70**	

Caption: *p<0.01, **p< 0.001 **L.1.1** – Sports Management and Legislation, **L.1.2** – Sports Biodynamics, **L.1.3** – Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, **L.1.4** – Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, **L.2.1** – Sports Planning and Management, **L.2.2** – Sports Assessment, **L.2.3** – Sports Communication and Integration, **L.2.4** – Sports Self-reflection and Update, **D.1** – Professional Knowledge, **D.2** – Professional Skills, **General** – Overall Assessment of Perceived Competence.

The crossings between indicators of different dimensions showed that only three showed strong levels of correlation. Other crossings obtained moderate (five associations) or weak (eight local) correlation. Overall, we found a strong correlation (rs 0.64) between the dimensions of Professional Knowledge and Professional Skills.

While most indicators of Professional Knowledge showed moderate levels of correlation with the respective dimension, indicators of Professional Skills tended to strong levels of correlation, with the exception of the indicator of the skill Sports Communication and Integration, which showed moderate correlation (rs 0.55). In addition to the dimensions Professional Knowledge (rs 0.97) and Professional Skills (rs 0.70), the indicator of Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports (rs 0.71) showed a strong association with the overall concept of Perceived Competence. Other indicators showed moderate association with the overall assessment, the levels of correlation of which ranged between rs 0.41 and rs 0.57.

The results of the level of association between the Professional

Competence perceived and the Importance Attributed to competences (Table 5) helped in identifying some potentialities and professional needs of the coaches assessed. Professional Knowledge of Theory and Methodology of Sports Training stood out among other competences as they presented a strong correlation between the Importance Attributed and Perceived Competence (rs 0.66). In fact, this power includes a potentiality of coaches assessed that, besides considering it very important (98.1%) for their professional intervention, revealed higher Self-perception of competence (95.8%). Similar results were found with the Professional Skills for Sports Planning and Management and Sports Communication and Integration, which were also considered very important competences (95.3%) and, for which, coaches reported high levels of mastery (93.9% and 93.4%, respectively), although the correlations were moderate (rs 0.50 and rs 0.57, respectively).

Table 5. Level of association between the Importance Attributed and the Competence Perceived by sports coaches from Santa Catarina

Variables	CPL1.1	CPL1.2	CPL1.3	CPL1.4	CPL2.1	CPL2.2	CPL2.3	CPL2.4	CPD.1	CPD.2	CPGeneral
IALL1	0.41**	0.22**	0.32**	0.19**	0.17**	0.25**	0.30**	0.29**	0.35**	0.19**	0.32**
IALL2	0.28**	0.46**	0.28**	0.38**	0.37**	0.49**	0.38**	0.21**	0.48**	0.38**	0.46**
IALL3	0.21**	0.22**	0.50**	0.37**	0.34**	0.23**	0.51**	0.20**	0.39**	0.33**	0.37**
IALL4	0.19**	0.29**	0.37**	0.66**	0.54**	0.37**	0.52**	0.38**	0.30**	0.42**	0.29**
IALL1.1	0.26**	0.24**	0.32**	0.40**	0.50**	0.32**	0.48**	0.31**	0.25**	0.37**	0.24**
IALL2.2	0.20**	0.51**	0.28**	0.38**	0.45**	0.49**	0.38**	0.31**	0.39**	0.38**	0.37**
IALL3.3	0.21**	0.28**	0.46**	0.51**	0.50**	0.39**	0.57**	0.37**	0.37**	0.45**	0.35**
IALL4.4	0.27**	0.38**	0.37**	0.24**	0.28**	0.25**	0.37**	0.34**	0.29**	0.30**	0.28**
IAD.1	0.29**	0.38**	0.38**	0.38**	0.55**	0.38**	0.52**	0.31**	0.40**	0.34**	0.38**
IAD.2	0.19**	0.39**	0.31**	0.31**	0.39**	0.35**	0.52**	0.27**	0.26**	0.34**	0.25**
IAGeneral	0.27**	0.42**	0.34**	0.35**	0.32**	0.39**	0.48**	0.28**	0.36**	0.31**	0.34**

Caption: *p<0.01, **p<0.001 **CPL1.1** – Sports Management and Legislation, **CPL1.2** – Sports Biodynamics, **CPL1.3** – Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, **CPL1.4** – Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, **CPL2.1** – Sports Planning and Management, **CPL2.2** – Sports Assessment, **CPL2.3** – Sports Communication and Integration, **CPL2.4** – Sports Self-reflection and Update, **CPD.1** – Professional Knowledge, **CPD.2** – Professional Skills, **CPGeneral** – Overall Assessment of Perceived Competence. **IALL1.1** – Sports Management and Legislation, **IALL1.2** – Sports Biodynamics, **IALL1.3** – Psycho-Socio-Cultural Factors of Sports, **IALL1.4** – Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, **IALL2.1** – Sports Planning and Management, **IALL2.2** – Sports Assessment, **IALL2.3** – Sports Communication and Integration, **IALL2.4** – Sports Self-reflection and Update, **IAD.1** – Professional Knowledge, **IAD.2** – Professional Skills, **IAGeneral** – Overall Assessment of

Other associations between the respective indicators of both constructs showed moderate correlations, except the indicator of the skill Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update, which had a weak correlation (rs 0.34). This skill can be considered a professional need alongside the skill Sports Assessment, due to the relative importance of the intervention in the area (85.0% and 92.5% respectively) as well as the lowest mastery between perceived by the coaches assessed (86.5% and 87.8%, respectively). Likewise, the Professional Knowledge Sports Management and Legislation and

Sports Biomechanics can be considered professional needs, which also received relative importance (80.3% and 92.5%, respectively), but with lower competence perceived by coaches from Santa Catarina (65.3% and 81.7%, respectively).

The results of the Importance Attributed to competences are similar to those found with Portuguese coaches (SIMÃO, 1998) and Physical Education teachers (NASCIMENTO; GRAÇA, 1998). In addition, they seem to confirm the needs of coaches of the 21st century, highlighted by Rosado (2000), including the high level of mastery of the sport and its methodology, but also to adopt a new attitude that values the motivational aspects of athletes and their personal and social development.

While the process of sports training demands scientific knowledge that is increasingly broad and diverse, yet a narrow view has prevailed in this area, considering only the knowledge generated by the biomechanics and physiology for success in sport performance. The evidence seems to follow the current trend of appreciation of biodynamic aspect investigations of sports performance. In fact, knowledge of Kinanthropometry, sports psychology, learning, and motor control have only recently received attention (TANI, 2002), as well as knowledge of sports teaching for the planning and organization of training sessions (SHIGUNOV 1998).

The assessment skill has been considered essential to professional performance in Physical Education (NASCIMENTO, 1999) and, in particular, sports coaches (MARINHO, 2007), due to the need to observe the performance of performers in the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological dimensions to help in the planning and scope of the proposed goals. A study of Portuguese coaches confirms the importance of assessment in the sport in which very experienced coaches significantly appreciated knowledge of the fundamentals of motor behavior (RESENDE; MOSQUE; FERNANDEZ; 2007).

The results revealed that most coaches assessed investigated high levels of Self-perception of Professional Competence, both in their overall assessment and the dimensions Professional Knowledge and Professional Skills. These results are similar to those found with Portuguese teachers (NASCIMENTO; GRAÇA, 1998) and coaches (SIMÃO, 1998), as well as Brazilian Physical Education students (VIEIRA; VIEIRA; FERNANDES, 2006). In addition, they confirm the competences required from high-performance sports coaches, as

highlighted by MARQUES (2000), in particular the mastery of practical skills, scientific knowledge, capacity for reflection, and decision making.

Although some research indicates that professionals of the area master the assessment ability (NASCIMENTO, 1999; SIMÃO, 1998), it is believed that some specific matters in the sports training process, in particular to establish and assess the achievement of goals (BÖHME, 1997; MACHADO; FERNANDES FILHO, 2001), may result in difficulties in establishing criteria for success and assessing the effectiveness of the work. It is noteworthy that the lack of periodical assessments often leads to inadequate physical efforts, which may not encourage individuals to participate in scheduled activities (BORIN; PRESTES; MOURA, 2007; GUEDES; GUEDES, 2006). As for self-reflection, Brazilian volleyball coaches assessed considered the reflection on the practice and professional development as an important and necessary area in the formation of coaches, considering the reflection as a constant construction and reconstruction of situations to achieve better results (MARINHO, 2007).

Conclusions

The evidence confirms the high Importance Attributed to the indicators, dimensions, and Overall Assessment of Professional Competences of sports coaches. Most coaches assessed also believe they master the knowledge and skills needed for professional intervention in this area. Overall, the coaches always attributed greater Importance to the field of Professional Competences.

Besides confirming the constructs of the dimensions investigated, the levels of correlation allowed for the identification of some potentialities and professional needs. While knowledge of Theory and Methodology of Sports Training and skills on Sports Planning and Management and Sports Communication and Integration stood out as potentialities, knowledge of Sports Biodynamics and Sports Management and Legislation and skills on Sports Professional Self-reflection and Update and Sports Assessment comprise some professional needs to justify the implementation of programs of continuing education for improvement of professional intervention of sports coaches.

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Endereço para correspondência

jorgeboth@yahoo.com.br

Jorge Both

Prefeitura Municipal de Florianópolis, Secretaria de Educação

Escola Básica Municipal Anísio Teixeira

Rua João Cândio Jacques, s/n, Costeira do Pirajubaé

CEP: 88047-010 - Florianópolis, SC - Brasil