



## Parameters for the Study of Socio-Emotional Competencies in Baseball Coaches

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Baseball coach training through competency-based education entails a change of paradigm in traditional education to cope with the challenges posed by several contexts with the necessary knowledge.

**Aim:** To design a set of parameters for the study of socio-emotional competencies in U-15 and Junior baseball coaches at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy, in Camagüey.

**Materials and methods:** The research was conducted in the 2018-2019 academic year. A group of ten coaches selected by intentional sampling from the U-15 and





Junior baseball categories at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy was diagnosed after shortcomings observed in terms of team cohesion and feeling of belonging, which hindered adequate cohesion and interpersonal relations involving coaches, directors, and athletes.

**Results:** The study demonstrated that the social and emotional factors are present apparently in the sports scenario. Hence, postgraduate education must consider and assume committed development of socio-affective competencies, to train professionally competent coaches and directors.

**Conclusions:** The inclusion of the parameters designed and the ensuing diagnostic demonstrated the existence of theoretical-methodological shortcomings associated with socio-emotionally-competency-based education in the baseball team coaches and directors.

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional competencies, management.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the onset of the new millennium, the systematization of the training process demands the search for new models for the training of baseball coaches, who must be characterized by competent autonomy, capable of running a sports team, having reflexive thinking that allows them to question, discuss, transform, and enrich practice. Hence, coaches must be trained to seek higher competitiveness at work and meet this social demand.

Accordingly, competence-based training of baseball coaches, according to Tobón, (2017), entails the search for strategies to process, analyze, create, adapt, and apply knowledge to address particular issues, with an enterprising spirit. The performance of the members of the board of directors requires the deployment of competencies; however, the conception of university degree curricula does not support competency-based education. Their labor usually relies on skills, knowledge, and values, which are the essential pillars of competency structure.

In addition, Rodríguez-Mena, M. and Corral, R. (2015) conceive competency as an emerging and self-arranged process of potentiality updates, and a mobilization-articulation of necessary resources to meet particular demands of a historically constructed social practice expressed through the individual and/collective self-regulated and socially valued performance given its suitability.

In this context, the concept of competency is conceived as emerging from the dynamic interaction produced by multiple variables: the person in the activity (and learning), the learning context or situation, and the requirements generated by the situation itself. Cejas and Pérez (2016) refer to professional competency training as





the knowledge, motivations, habits, values, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes shared by individuals at work efficiently.

In turn, Tejada, J. and Ruiz, C. (2016) noted that a competent professional is one who can participate in the organization of his work's post and setting, organize and decide, and is willing to accept responsibilities. Likewise, they can identify the contents of participatory competency as coordination, organization, relationship, conviction, decision, responsibility, and management capacities.

In that sense, Rodríguez-Mena, M., López, C.L., and Corral, R. (2019) stated that competency-based training implemented to be able to participate and learn better, depends largely on the way the insertion of the person is produced into different social media and the tools available in such networks (including their own). The relationships that will mark the tendency of future people's development are the ones that stimulate mutual interaction, full communication, cooperation, and collaboration to construct meanings, which enable the creation of development-enhancing spaces.

In that direction, Gil, J., Moliner, O., Chiva, O., and García, R. (2016) stressed how difficult is to train a good professional without an ethical and responsible commitment to social improvement and the common wellbeing.

In that sense, this paper considers it valid to assume the formative approach based on competencies, since it facilitates the development of true comprehensive education that embraces every human dimension, particularly the socio-emotional competencies, as they offer new meanings to practice, and promote participatory experiences that train baseball coaches and directors.

Consequently, it is necessary to present some elements that ratify the urgency of designing indicators for the study of socio-emotional competencies based on the conditions surrounding the baseball coaches and directors. It takes into account this study's author's experience and a preliminary diagnostic, which revealed the following shortcomings:

- Poor assertiveness in decision-making at different moments of training, especially in the competition.
- No anticipated and adequate definition of the best strategies and procedures to address certain conflicts and issues.
- Contradictions in interpersonal communication with the managing board members and with the athletes.
- Limitations as to the mastery of managing techniques to encourage changes in team dynamics, and the solution of the existing problems.

In keeping with con Mertens, L. (2000), coaches are only trained to develop analytical capacities, which are important, but "...the success will depend,





ultimately, on their capacity to foresee problems, and then suggest coaches should receive training related to skill and/or competency acquisition to identify problems and opportunities, with an ensuing team cohesion in favor of the objectives set.

The socio-emotional competencies are based on emotional competencies, as highlighted by Colunga, S. and García, J. (2016). Emotional competency is the set of knowledge, capacities, skills, and attitudes needed to understand, express, and regulate emotional phenomena adequately.

The social and emotional factors are also present in the educational setting, thus demonstrating the relevance of this type of socio-emotional competencies through different research studies and theories contributed by Pérez, N.P. *et. al.*, (2011).

Orejudo & Planas (2016) claimed that a teaching-learning process centered not only on the cognitive component but on the emotional and social ones is essential. This idea is shared in different concepts about this topic, since there is consensus on the importance of not only cognition-based teaching but teaching to prepare for living, thus meeting the social needs.

Moreover, ANECA (2005) recommends 12 generic competencies, which have been summarized and classified into three groups:

- Interpersonal competencies: individual skills, social skills, and linguistic skills.
- Instrumental competencies: cognitive skills, methodological capacities, technological skills.
- Systemic competencies: skills that refer to whole systems.

All entail a combination of understanding, sensitivity, and knowledge that show how the components of a whole are linked to one another.

Accordingly, this study aims to design a set of parameters for the study of socio-emotional competencies in U-15 and Junior baseball coaches at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy, in Camagüey.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research was conducted in the 2018-2019 academic year. A group of ten coaches selected by intentional sampling from the U-15 and Junior baseball categories at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy was diagnosed after some shortcomings were observed in terms of team cohesion and feeling of belonging, which hindered adequate harmony and interpersonal relations involving coaches, directors, and athletes.

The selection criteria used are expressed below:

- Pitching coaches, physical coaches, and baseball team managers in the U-15 and Junior baseball categories at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy.





- Willingness to participate in the project.

The study relied on documentary analysis and the sources provided by baseball team coaches, to gather information about the training in socio-emotional competencies, according to the ruling documents of INDER. The observation was useful to determine the main characteristics of baseball team coaches regarding the parameters suggested for the research, during training and competition. A survey was conducted to determine the knowledge and skills of baseball team coaches about socio-emotional competency training. A questionnaire was applied to check the willingness and knowledge of baseball team coaches in the U-15 and Junior categories.

The statistical-mathematical methods used in the study were percent analysis to process the data obtained through empirical methods and to establish adequate generalizations. Descriptive statistics permitted revealing the research results through tables and graphics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A proposal for the implementation of parameters associated with baseball team coach training.

Interpersonal competencies:

- Communication.
- Ethical commitments.
- Empathy.

Instrumental competencies:

- Teamwork.
- Information management capacity.
- Problem-solving.

Systemic competencies:

- Adaptation to new situations.
- Capacity to generate new ideas (creativity).
- Decision-making.

In this study, it was necessary to consider professional coach training, encouraging them to commit to explicit and implicit development of socio-affective competencies, since they lead to the acquisition of significant knowledge, emotional development, decision-making, and proper interpersonal relationships in and outside the training facilities, including their emotionality and labor efficiency.

This research recommends and contextualizes a series of parameters to evaluate baseball team coach training at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy, with a





socio-emotional-based education, which are subordinated to dimension: Socio-affective generic competencies.

Indicator 1: Interpersonal competencies.

Variables for study:

- a) Assertive communication.
- b) Empathy.

Indicator 2: Instrumental competencies.

Variables for study:

- a) Teamwork.
- b) Problem-solving.

Indicator 3: Systemic competencies.

Variables for evaluation:

- a) Adaptation to new situations.
- b) Decision-making.

The previous methods and techniques were conducted according to the parameters for the study of socio-emotional competencies in baseball coaches, with the following results:

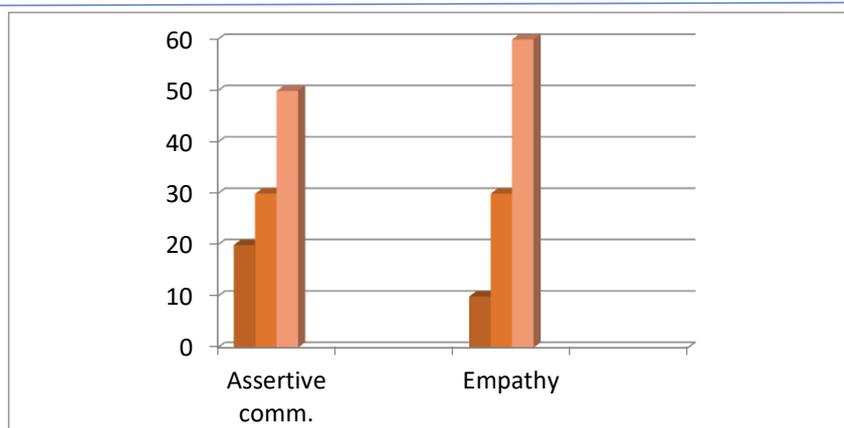
Documentary analysis evidenced that the methodological training plans at the department lack proper coach training actions as to new choices for an efficient psychological scenario. The other instruments showed the coaches' need to access tools to achieve cohesive teamwork, including interpersonal relationships. However, they acknowledged lacking the necessary theoretical-methodological training.

The main difficulties that according to them, hinder the acquisition of socio-emotional competencies in team leadership are associated with shortages of theoretical-methodological resources, the exclusion of topics related to interpersonal relationships that embody effective communication among the team members, and other work strategies, like assertiveness and efficient decision-making during key plays and moments, within the methodological work of the department. The main regularities observed through the utilization of instruments applied in the initial exploration based on the analysis of parameters are the following:

Dimension: Socio-affective generic competencies.

Indicator 1: Interpersonal competencies (Figure 1).





**Fig. 1.** Interpersonal competencies

Variable:

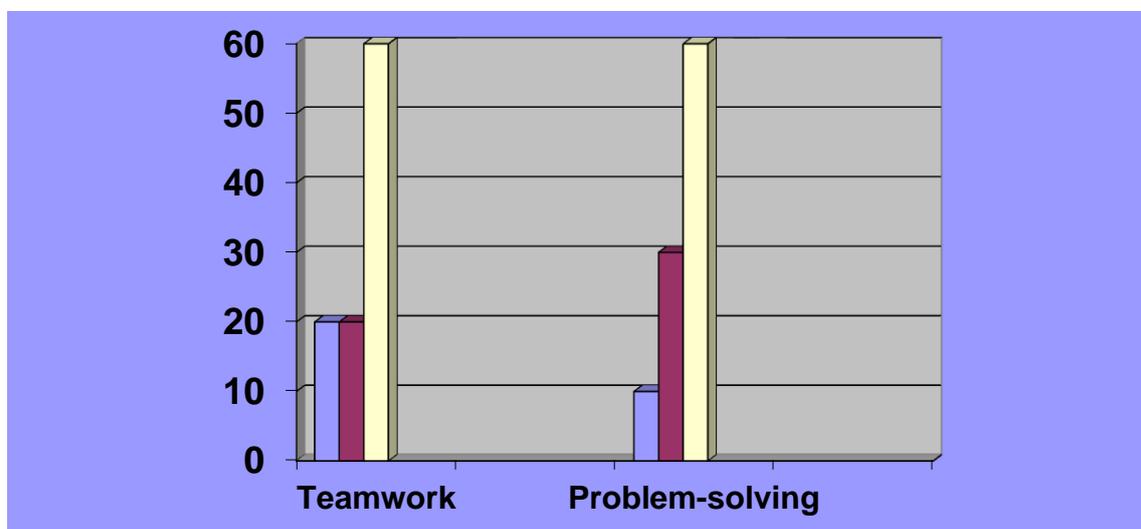
a) Assertive communication.

Only two of the coaches (20%), showed assertive managing styles at certain moments of the sports activity. Furthermore, three (30%) expressed some assertiveness during training and competitions, and five (50%) evidenced a low level, as they express offensive communication styles in certain sports contexts, which makes it difficult to establish positive interpersonal relationships.

Variable:

b) Empathy.

Only one coach is capable of understanding other's signs through the looks, the tone of voice, and gestures, in addition to recognizing the viewpoints and feelings of his teammates and athletes. Likewise, three coaches (30%) recognized viewpoints and feelings expressed by other members of the managing corp at times; a negative evaluation was achieved by not recognizing the viewpoints and feelings of their partners and athletes (60%), in addition to not being capable of expressing positive interpersonal relationships to their work partners and the athletes. Indicator 2: Instrumental competencies (Figure 2).





**Fig. 2.** Instrumental competencies

Variable:

a) Teamwork.

Two of the ten members of the managing corp (20%) favored a setting of collaboration and mutual support, encouraging the integration and consensus of different approaches to making decisions and designing strategies.

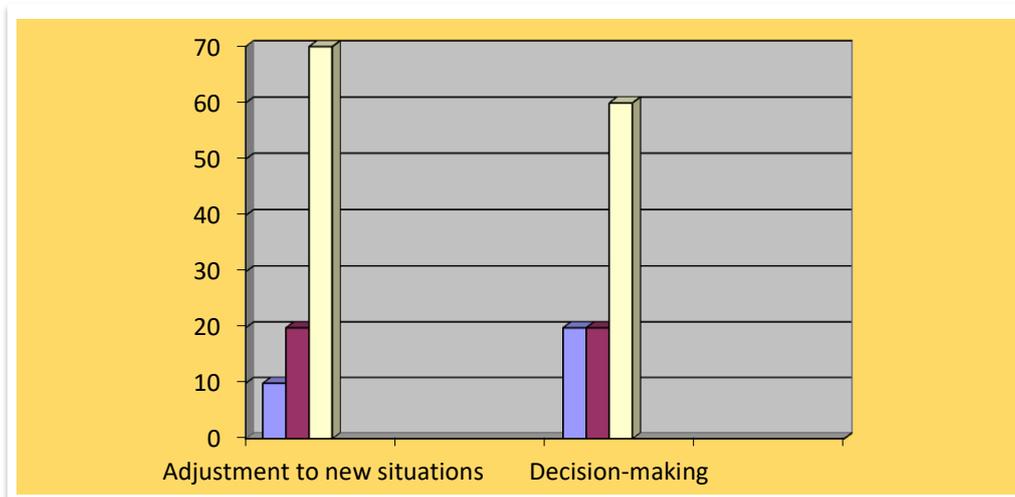
Two of the members in the managing corp (20%) occasionally shared their recognitions for the team's achievements, but few times took responsibility for the team's deficiencies. Six individuals (60%) reacted as outsiders and irreverent before the existence of an environment of collaboration and mutual support among the members of the managing corp.

Variable:

b) Problem-solving.

One of the coaches (10%) showed tools to mediate in face of problems and conflicts involving the other coaches and the athletes. Three of them (30%), occasionally could initiate and run changes, and negotiate and address conflicts. Six (60%) did not show the tools that favor mediation in face of problems of coaches and athletes or negotiating or addressing conflicts.

Indicator 3: Systemic competencies (Figure 3)



**Fig. 3** Systemic competencies

Variable:

a) Adjustment to new situations.

One of the coaches showed adaptative responses and resources to deal with new situations, he also inspired safety in the other coaches and the athletes. Two (20%) showed a mid-adaptative response level in the search for resources to deal with new situations, with optimism and perseverance at times. Moreover, seven (70%)





were unable to show perseverance in dealing with obstacles during new situations, nor did they express adaptative responses or resources to deal with new situations.

b) Decision-making.

Two of the ten coaches (20%) showed confidence in decision-making and expressed self-personal power. Additionally, two of them (20%) were hesitant as to personal power, which was observed in decision-making. Six coaches (60%) displayed uncertainty and lack of confidence during decision-making; besides, they did not follow a reflexive strategy during the process.

Upon data compilation of the different techniques used according to the parameters recommended for this study, the level was low, which calls for an overall analysis of the information produced. The evaluation shown by the variables demonstrates the absence of knowledge of baseball about socio-emotional competencies by the team coaches.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the theoretical-methodological rationale in the bibliography demonstrated the interest in baseball coach and director training. However, the interest in interpersonal skill acquisition for improvements in sports performance is poor, including the acquisition of socio-emotional competencies. It evidenced that research on this professional competency is scarce.

Based on the shortcomings identified in the fact diagnostic, and the limitations related to the sports setting, there is a need for designing indicators for the study of socio-emotional competencies in baseball team coaches, considering the generic competencies as a starting point, which stems from an overall analysis.

The inclusion of the parameters designed and the ensuing diagnostic demonstrated the existence of theoretical-methodological shortcomings associated with socio-emotionally-competency-based education in the baseball team coaches and directors, in the U-15 and Junior categories, at the Cerro Pelado Starters Sports Academy, in Camagüey, thus justifying the need for a strategic conception.

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**Conflict of interests:**

The authors declare the existence of no conflict of interest.

**Authorship statement:**

The authors have participated in the redaction of the manuscript and document analysis.

