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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UDI EDUCATION ZONE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the conflict management styles of special education sports administrators in secondary schools in Udi Education Zone. Two (2) research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was fifty four special education sports administrators and three special education sports coordinators in Udi Education Zone. All the fifty seven (57) subjects were used for the study. A close ended questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequency and percentages were used to answer the research questions. The results showed that majority of the sports administrators adopt competing and compromising styles. The result also revealed the different situations that would warrant the adoption of the various conflict management styles in Udi Education Zone. It was recommended among others that workshops and seminar should be organized to train the sports administrators on the best use of the various conflict management styles.

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of human events including sports, conflict certainly arises. Whenever there are people working together in an organization or institution like school or sports organization, the tendency to disagree on certain issues always occur. In secondary school sports, this disagreement may be between special education sports administrator and staff, game master and athlete, game official and game master, athlete and spectators, or staff, or among fellow athletes and so on. Conflicts are inherent and inevitable in secondary school sports and can be destructive if care is not taken to handle it through appropriate conflict management style. Conflicts have been defined in a number of ways by different authors. Ezegebe (1997) defined conflicts as mutual hostility in inter human relationship. The mutual hostility according to Ezegebe can occur in the form of insults, name calling, blackmailing, sarcasm, false accusation, withdrawal of service, salaries, fringe benefits and so on. Fadipo and Ojedele (2000) defined conflict as a form of disagreement in organization between individuals or groups who have cause to interact formally or informally. In this study conflict is defined as a situation where two or more persons who work together in secondary

school sports disagree or dispute especially in matters that relate directly or indirectly to their goals. Conflict in secondary school sports can come in different types. These include: intra-personal conflict which is conflict within an individual; inter-personal conflict which occurs between two or more persons and finally inter-group conflict which involves two or more different groups such as students and game officials (Monday & Premeaux, 1995).

The issue of conflict in secondary school sports is very important as it can have a lasting impact and detrimentally influence the organizer's ability to deliver services. In secondary schools, there are many team sports. The presence of different personalities on a sports team could lead to a variety of conflicts. Australian Sports Commission (2003) noted that conflicts in sports are likely to arise in a number of situations. These include: disagreement from participant over an infringement, perceived bias shown by the officials in the eyes of participants or coaches, frustration shown by participants as a result of their level of performance or sledging between participants. Other causes as stated by Rahim (2002) include differences in personal background, scarcity of resources, poor communication, and lack of teamwork. These also apply to sports in secondary schools since it involves individuals with different background. Sports as defined by Ojeme (2007) is a form of social involvement.

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According to Ojeme, a common feature of sports as a social involvement is that it arouses strong emotion and tension among participants who are either connected directly or indirectly. According to Omolawon (2013) sports is described as those physical activities engaged in during recreation or competition which have direct effects on the mental, emotional, organic, and social development of an individual. In this study, sports is defined as activities undertaken in the form of athletics or games: recreational or competitive, organized by sports administrator. Ajuwe (1987) pointed out that special education sports administrators are responsible for organizing sports and games in schools. Sports administrator is therefore described here as either a professional or non-professional person in sports, a staff of the school who has the right and responsibility of organizing sports for members of the school. In this study, special education sports administrator is used interchangeably and synonymously with games master or mistress.

In Secondary school, special education sports administrator is faced with so many functions which include: budgeting, purchasing, maintenance of facilities and equipment, scheduling of games and activities, evaluation among others in the course of sports administration (Ayanlaja, 2006). Administration according to Ayanlaja is functions and responsibilities essential to the achievement of established goals through associated efforts. When this is applied to sports in schools it may be referred to as school sports administration. School sports administration according to Fasan (2000) involves the process of coordinating planned actions, programmes and activities of school sports including personnel with the sole aim of accomplishing the goals of the programme. In the context of this study, school sports administration is defined as a process of planning, organizing, coordinating and evaluating activities and resources in intramural sports in secondary school. Intramural sports according to National Association for Sports and Physical Education (2001) are sports competitions that are organized within an institution for voluntary participation by all the students irrespective of age, gender ability level among others. The objectives of intramural sports according to the association include among others: to enhance social interaction, enhance leisure time and reduce conflict in secondary school sports.

Excessive conflict can disrupt the organization in terms of reducing co-operation, disrupting communication, destroying morale, polarizing individuals and groups, producing irresponsible behaviours and creating suspicion and distrust (Lippit, 1994). However, conflict has been shown to increase group outcomes when managed properly (Alper, Tjopvold & Law, 2000; Khun & Poole, 2000 Dechurch & Mark, 2001). This shows that conflict in any organization including sports in secondary schools can be minimized through proper management. The challenge with conflict is therefore to manage it properly so that it does not get out of hand. Management according to Peretomode (1996) is the social and interaction process involving a sequence of events which include: planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling or leading in order to use available resources to achieve desired outcome in the fastest and most efficient way. Management is defined in this study as a process of guiding group's efforts toward controlling conflict in school sports. Thus management

could be applied in various situations such as when there is conflict. This may be referred to as conflict management. Conflict management is the ability to deal with every situation that involves personal interactions and differences of opinions (Cassey & Cassey, 1997). The ultimate purpose of conflict management is to reduce the incidence of dysfunctional conflict and to increase the likelihood that any conflict that takes place will be resolved efficiently and effectively. Conflict management is operationally defined in this study as a process whereby a special education sports administrator makes use of appropriate measures to reduce or stop conflict which is destructive to sports organization. This can be achieved through the use of appropriate conflict management styles. The classification of such Conflict management styles according to Rahim (2002) are as a result of one's concern for self and concern for others. Conflict management styles are thus classified into five types: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising styles (Rahim, 2002). Integrating style which is also called collaborating or problem solving style involves openness, exchange of information, looking for alternatives, and examining differences to resolve conflict in a manner that is acceptable to both parties (Rahim, 2002).

According to Rahim, Integrating style refers to higher concern for self as well as the other party involved in conflict. Obliging or accommodating style refers to low concern for self and high concern for others. This style attempts to minimize the differences and highlight the concern of other party (Rahim, 2002). However, he observed that this style creates good relationship between parties but the potential for conflict remains. Another style which is competing or dominating style as described by Rahim (2002) involves high concern for self, and low concern for other party involved in the conflict. Rahim described dominating as forcing one's view point at the expense of others. Those who use this style often evoke their formal authority to threaten or actually use demotion, dismissal and other evaluation and punishments in order to force their resolution on others. With avoidance style, a party fails to satisfy his or her own concern as well as the concern of the other party (Rahim, 2002). It is characterized by the tendency that conflict does not exist (Monday & Premeaux, 1995). The researchers further stated that its success is usually only short term and result in a condition where unresolved conflicts affect the achievement of the organization's goals. Compromising style involves give-and-take where both parties give something to make a mutually acceptable decision (Rahim, 2002).

Rahim further stated that this style is characterized by moderate and intermediate concern for self and others with no win or loss outcome. The ability to know when to apply any of the above mentioned styles is not an easy accomplishment. Rahim (2001) noted that there is no particular style that is suitable in every conflict situation; rather the secret to effective conflict management is to use an appropriate style and to intervene at the appropriate time. Generally, collaborating and to some extent compromising styles are appropriate for dealing with strategic issues, that is, complex or very important issues, while the rest of the styles can be used to deal with day-to-day problems (Guler, Deniz & Melek, 2008). There is no doubt that conflict still occurs in secondary school sports without permanent solution in sight. Attempts to

resolve conflict by special education sports administrators sometimes degenerate into quarrelling and faction fighting thereby disrupting the sports activities. Conflict that disrupts sports activities in secondary school sports may be as a result of the sports administrator's inability to handle conflict properly. An administrator especially the special education sports administrator may have many styles which he or she adopts but consistently utilizes one than others and will be identified with it. This is why there is need to find out the conflict management styles of sports administrators in secondary schools in Udi Education Zone. Udi Education Zone is one of the six education zones in Enugu state with a large land mass. Udi Education Zone is comprised of two (2) local government areas namely; Udi and Ezeagu. There are secondary schools in Udi education zone. The distribution of the secondary schools in the LGAs of the zone are as follows: twenty three (23) in Udi and twenty eight (28) in Ezeagu (Enugu State Post-Primary School Management Board, 2012). Majority of these schools are located in the rural area where there are limited resources for sports. The struggle for the scarce resources consequently results to frequent conflict in the secondary school sports especially during intramural sports. The special education sports administrators in the schools are however expected to manage these conflicts through appropriate conflict management styles. More so conflict which is not properly managed can result to feeling of insecurity and poor human relation. It can even escalate leading to break down of rules and code of conduct, power struggle or even violence. It is therefore on this premise that the present study is imperative to explore the conflict management styles of special education sports administrators and how they use the styles in secondary schools in Udi Education zone.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. what are the different conflict management styles of special education sports administrators in secondary schools in Udi Education Zone?
2. what are the situations that warrant the adoption of different conflict management styles by secondary school special education sports administrators in Udi Education Zone?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design for this study was the descriptive survey. According to Ali (2006), descriptive survey is mainly concerned with describing events as they are, without any manipulation of what caused the event or what is being observed. Fifty seven (57) subjects formed the population. these comprised of fifty-four (54) special education sports administrators who are also the physical educators from the fifty-one secondary schools in Udi Educational Zone. (Sports Unit, Enugu State Post-Primary School Management Board, 2012). The study also involved three (3) key informants who included the zonal sports coordinator and the two (2) sports unit coordinators in Udi and Ezeagu LGAs respectively. All the fifty-four sports administrators and the three (3) sports coordinators were used in this study. This is because their

number is small and manageable. This is in line with the assertion by Udo (2004) that if the population under investigation is small, it is appropriate to use the entire population as a unit. In other words, there was no sampling in this study. A close-ended questionnaire was the instrument used in this study. The instrument was named Conflict Management Styles of Sports Administrators Questionnaire (COMSSAQ). The face validity of the instrument was established by three experts in the Department of Health and Physical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, the split half method was used. The instrument was administered to twenty secondary schools sports administrators in Obollo Education Zone. The questionnaire items were divided into two groups of even and odd numbers. The responses of the two groups were analyzed to establish the correlation co-efficient of the instrument using Pearson product moment (r). The questionnaire had reliability co-efficient of .89 and was considered reliable for use in the present study. This is based on the suggestion by Okpala and Ogbazi (1994) that if the correlation co-efficient is up to .60 and above, the instrument should be considered reliable for use.

The researchers personally administered the copies of questionnaire to the sports administrators of the schools and collected them back immediately in order to ensure high return rate. Fifty seven (57) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the subjects and there was a return rate of 100%. This was successful through the help of the coordinator who introduced the researchers to the sports administrators during one of their zonal meetings and at the same time solicited for their cooperation. Frequency and percentages were used to answer the various research questions. The cumulative percentages were used in taking decisions on the research questions.

RESULTS

Table 1 above shows that 20 (35.1%) respondents investigate issue with the other party to find out solution acceptable to both parties, 21 (36.8%) try to reconcile differences and look for solution where everyone is satisfied. Also the table revealed that 22 (38.6%) try to preserve long lasting relationship with parties in conflict, 23 (40.4%) of them try to identify the underlying concern of all the parties in conflict and find alternative which meets both sets of concern, while 19 (33.3%) indicated that they try to show openness to each party and create a conducive environment for exchange of information. Moreso, 16(28.1%) respectively indicated that they try to satisfy the wish of the other party in conflict; and always accept the wishes of the other party and overlook the differences in order to maintain harmony. The table also show that 15 (26.3%) of the respondents respectively try to sooth the other person's feeling in order to preserve relationship; and always yield to the other person's point of view, while 13 representing 22.8% of the respondents try to give up their own wants to meet the other party's desire. Moreover, the data in the table revealed that 39 (68.4%) try to argue case with others and 37 (64.9%) respectively indicated that they use formal authority in order to assert their position with others; make sure of wining through any possible means irrespective of who is right or wrong; and force others to accept their own point of view. 38 (66.7%) of the subjects also indicated that they desire

Table 1. Percentage Adoption of Conflict Management styles by Special Education Sport Administrators (n = 57)

S/N	Items	Responses	
		F	%
Collaborating Style			
5	try to investigate an issue with the other party to find out solution acceptable to both parties.	20	35.1
6	try to reconcile their differences and look for a solution where everyone is satisfied.	21	36.8
7	try to preserve long lasting relationship with parties in conflict.	22	38.6
8	try to identify the underlying concern of all parties in conflict and to find alternative which meets both sets of concerns.	23	40.4
9	try to show openness to each party and create a conducive environment for exchange of information.	19	33.3
Cluster Percentage (%)			36.8
Accommodating Style			
10	try to satisfy the wish of the other party in conflict	16	28.1
11	Always accept the wishes of the other party and overlook the differences in order to maintain harmony.	16	28.1
12	try to soothe the other person's feeling in order to preserve relationship.	15	26.3
13	Always yield to the other person's point of view.	15	26.3
14	try to give up my own wants to meet the other party's desires.	13	22.8
Cluster percentage			26.3
Competing Style			
15	try to argue my case with others.	39	68.4
16	using formal authority in order to assert my position with others.	37	64.9
17	make sure of winning through any possible means irrespective of who is right or wrong.	37	64.9
18	desire to satisfy my own interest	38	66.7
19	Force others to accept my own point of view	37	64.9
Cluster Percentage (%)			65.9
Avoidance Style			
20	always withdraw from conflict situation with the hope that disagreement will eventually disappear.	15	26.3
21	always postpone an issue until later or better time	15	26.3
22	always pretend as though there was no conflict so that I will not be involved.	16	28.1
23	try to avoid unpleasantness to myself	18	31.6
24	always choose a solution where neither of the parties wins	16	28.1
Cluster Percentage (%)			28.1
Compromising Style			
25	negotiate with the other party so that compromise may be reached.	30	52.6
26	Open to any bargaining process that leads to a compromise	35	61.4
27	try to find a fair combination of gain and losses for both parties.	34	59.6
28	Seek for a middle ground in solving conflict where both parties would give something in order to take something.	26	45.6
29	Always go for a solution where both parties give up something to reach a mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfy both parties.	21	36.8
Cluster Percentage (%)			51.2

Table 2. Situations that warrant adoption of Conflict Management Styles by Special Education Sports Administrators (n = 57)

S/N	Items	Collaborating		Accommodating		Competing		Avoidance		Compromising	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
30	Issues are complex	46	80.7	0	0.0	9	15.8	0	0.0	2	3.5
31	Resources possessed by different parties are needed to solve common problem	42	73.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	26.3
32	Time is available for problem solving	35	61.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	22	38.6
33	One party alone cannot solve the problem	23	40.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	34	59.6
34	One believes that one may be wrong.	5	8.8	41	71.9	2	3.5	3	5.3	6	10.5
35	Willing to give up something in exchange for something from the other party in the future.	4	7.0	44	77.2	0	0.0	4	7.0	5	8.8
36	Preserving relationship is important	44	77.2	8	14.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	8.8
37	Issue is more important to the other party.	4	7.0	28	49.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	25	43.9
38	Speedy decision is needed.	5	8.8	0	0.0	52	91.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
39	Decision by the other party may be costly to me.	2	3.5	1	1.8	50	87.7	3	5.3	1	1.8
40	Issues is important to me.	42	73.7	0	0.0	14	24.6	0	0.0	1	1.8
41	Unpopular course of action is implemented.	28	49.1	1	1.8	26	45.6	2	3.5	0	0.0
42	Issue is trivial	15	26.3	0	0.0	3	5.3	38	66.7	1	1.8
43	Potential dysfunctional effect of controlling the other party outweighs benefits of resolution.	7	12.3	0	0.0	9	15.8	40	70.2	1	1.8
44	Cooling off period is needed	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.5	55	96.5	0	0.0
45	One perceives the chance of satisfying one's own concerns.	1	1.8	4	7.0	39	68.4	12	21.1	1	1.8
46	Goals of party are mutually exclusive	33	57.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	42.1
47	Consensus cannot be reached	2	3.5	0	0.0	3	5.3	0	0.0	52	91.2
48	Parties are equally powerful.	34	59.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.5	21	36.8
49	Temporal solution to a complex problems is needed	3	5.3	1	1.8	1	1.8	2	3.5	50	87.7

to satisfy their own interest during conflict. It was also revealed in the table that 15 (26.36) respectively always withdraw from conflict situation with the hope that disagreement will disappear; and always postpone an issue until later or better time. 16 (28.1%) respectively also show that they always pretend as though there was no conflict in order not to be involved; and always choose solution where neither of the parties wins. It is evident from the table that 18 (31.6%) of the respondents try to avoid unpleasantness to themselves. The result in the table also show that 30(52.6%) negotiate with the other party so that compromise may be reached, 35 (61.4%) indicated that they are open to any bargaining process that leads to a compromise. The table also show that 34 (59.6%) of the respondents try to find a fair combination of gain and losses for both parties and 26 (45.6%) seek for a middle ground in solving conflict where both parties would give something in order to take something. Moreover 21 (36.8%) always go for solution where both parties give up something to reach a mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties.

From the table, it could be seen that with cluster percentages of 65.9% and 51.2%, majority of the sports administrators adopt competing and compromising conflict management styles. Table 2 shows that 46(80.7%) of the respondents indicated that they would adopt collaborating styles whenever issues are complex. The data also show that 42(73.7%) would adopt collaborating style when resources possessed by different parties are needed to solve a common problem. Again 35 (61.4%) of them indicated that they would adopt collaborating style whenever time is available for problem solving. Moreso, 23 (40.4%) of the subjects agreed that they would adopt collaborating style whenever one party cannot solve the problems. Data in the table also show that 41 (71.9%) of the subjects admitted that they would adopt accommodating style whenever one believes that one may be wrong. Also 44 (77.2%) accepted that they would adopt accommodating when they are willing to give up something in exchange for something from the other party in the future. The table also revealed that 8(14.0%) of the respondents would adopt accommodating style whenever preserving relationship is important and 28 (49.1%) indicated that they would adopt accommodating style whenever issue is more important to the other party.

It is evident in the table that 52 (91.2%) of the subjects admitted that they would adopt competing style whenever speedy decision is needed. Also 50 (87.7%) agreed that they would adopt competing style when decision by the other party may be costly to them. The data show that 14 (24.6%) of them would adopt competing styles whenever issue is important to them and 26 (45.6%) indicated that they would adopt competing style whenever unpopular course of action is implemented. The table also reveal that 38(66.7%) of the respondents would adopt avoidance style whenever issue is trivial, 40 (70.2%) indicated that they would adopt avoidance style when potential dysfunctional effect of controlling the other party outweighs benefits of resolution. Also 55 (96.5%) of them accepted that they would adopt avoidance style when cooling off period is needed. However, 12 (21.1%) affirmed that they would adopt avoidance style whenever they perceive the chance of satisfying one's own concerns. Data in the table shows that 24 (42.1%) of the respondents showed that they

would adopt compromising style whenever goals of parties are mutually exclusive, 52 (91.2%) of them indicated that they would adopt compromising style whenever consensus cannot be reached. The table also reveal that 21 (26.8%) of the subjects would adopt compromising style whenever parties are equally powerful. Moreso, 50 (87.7%) of them affirmed that they would adopt compromising style when temporal solution to a complex problems is needed. From the Table it could be seen that different situations would warrant adoption of different conflict management styles by the sports administrators.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Conflict Management Styles adopted by the Special Education Sports Administrators

The study revealed that majority of the sports administrators adopt competing and compromising styles. This finding is expected and consequently not a surprise. The use of competing style is because of the win-loss mentality that often characterizes conflict groups and due to the peculiar nature of sports where a winner must emerge. The adoption of compromising style is because it is suitable in recreational and amateur games as indicated by Enes and Adnan (2009). This result is in agreement with the findings of Poloski and Sontor (2009) that compromising conflict management style as well as dominant (competing) style were the most frequently used styles among Croatian employees. The finding is not in line with the findings of Enes and Adnan (2009) who reported that the very dominant styles among coaches were bonding (collaborating) and reconciling (accommodating). The implication of this finding is that coach-player relationship will be disrupted with the use of competing style. This is not appropriate in sports teams where cooperation and commitment of both the team and the sports administrator is the key to success in competition. The sports administrators should therefore create an open and cooperative atmosphere that will consolidate their relationship with the athletes.

Situations that would warrant the adoption of different Conflict Management Styles

It was found that different situations warrant adoption of different conflict management styles by the sports administrators in Udi Education Zone. The situations that would warrant the adoption of the various styles by the sports administrators include: whenever issues are complex; resources possessed by different parties are needed to solve common problem; time is available; one person alone cannot solve the problem; one believes that one may be wrong; and is willing to give up something in exchange for something from the other party in the future. Others are whenever preserving relationship is important; issue is more important to the other party; speedy decision is needed; decision by the other party may be costly to one; issue is important to me, unpopular course of action is implemented; issue is trivial; and potential dysfunctional effect of controlling the other party outweighs benefit of resolution. It also include whenever cooling off period is needed; one perceives the chance of satisfying one's own concern; goals of party are mutually exclusive; parties are equally powerful; and when temporal solution to a complex problem is needed. This finding is anticipated and

consequently not a surprise because different conflict management styles are required in different situations and are adopted depending on the situation surrounding the sports administrators. This is in line with Rahim (2001) that there is no particular style that is suitable in every conflict situation; rather the secret to effective conflict management is to use appropriate style and to intervene at the appropriate time. Also the finding is in consonance with Gular, Deniz and Melek (2008) who affirmed that certain styles such as collaborating and to some extent compromise are suitable for dealing with strategic issues, while the rest of the styles are appropriate in dealing with day-to-day problems. The implication of this finding is that a particular conflict management style may be appropriate and used in a particular situation but not appropriate in another situation and not used. The special education sports administrators in secondary schools, in Udi Education Zone should therefore be enlightened on the appropriate situations for adoption of various conflict management styles.

Summary and Conclusions

The study investigated the conflict management styles of special education sports administrator in secondary schools in Udi Education Zone. Two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was fifty four special education sports administrators and three sports co-ordinators in Udi Education Zone. All the fifty seven (57) subjects were used for the study. A close ended questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequency and percentages were used to answer the research questions. The results showed that majority of the special education sports administrators adopt competing and compromising styles. The result also revealed the different situations that would warrant the adoption of the various conflict management styles

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Conflict management should be introduced as a course in the Special Education Unit and department of Health and Physical Education of Nigerian Universities to train the sports administrators or physical educators on the various ways to handle conflict in sports setting.
2. There should be workshops and seminars organized for the sports administrators in various secondary schools, to train them on the best use of these conflict management styles.

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