

Handling Student-Athletes through the Lens of Educational Leaders

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7315>

Received: 15 March 2023; Accepted: 20 March 2023; Published: 21 April 2023

ABSTRACT

Handling student-athletes has been a challenging yet rewarding journey for educational leaders. This phenomenological inquiry study aims to explore the experiences of educational leaders in handling student-athletes. This study conducted an In-depth Interview of ten (10) school heads or principals to share their experiences regarding setbacks, coping strategies, and insights on handling student-athletes. The findings reveal that educational leaders need more sports equipment and practice facilities, school funds, and coaches' skills training, and there are student athletes' low academic performance and misbehavior. However, this study presents that the abovementioned setbacks can be addressed by internal fund allocation, resource generation, coaches' skills development programs, and student athletes' development programs. This study also discloses that educational leaders perceive that well-funded sports program produces better results. They also believe stakeholders play an essential role in sustaining their financial performance. More than that, educational leaders realize that competent coaches significantly bring out winnable student-athletes. They likewise point out that student-athletes must value academics as they value sports. The study's findings serve as a basis for developing a quality management system for sports programs that may include plans, programs, projects, activities, and policies that can improve the management of sports programs. Paper presentation and publication of this paper may add to the related studies and literature on sports management.

Keywords: Coping strategies, handling student-athletes, setbacks, insights, phenomenological inquiry

INTRODUCTION

Sports programs worldwide are beset with varied predicaments. Among these are inadequate sports equipment and practice facilities, limited budget, insufficient coaches' skills training, and student athletes' low academic performance and misbehavior.

Talabi (1998) as cited by Diejomaoh, Akarah, and Tayire (2015), indicated that most developing countries must catch up in developing student-athletes because top-of-the-line equipment and facilities are needed to achieve world-class status. Jeroh (2012) stated having a favorable atmosphere where student-athletes practice and compete. Every sports program needs sufficient and well-prepared facilities, equipment and materials, good coaching, and medical care. Further, Torres et al. (2018) expressed that it would be worthwhile to concentrate on suitable sports materials that could solve insufficiency issues and are ideally suited for use in student-athlete training.

Dohle and Wansink (2013) exposed that aside from issues on the inadequacy of sports equipment and facilities, the educational leaders' main problem is the school's limited finances. Botha (2013) affirmed that

a lack of financial resources makes it challenging to obtain high-quality sports programs, but the situation worsens when financial resources are mismanaged. Mestry (2013) recommended that schools provide financial resources to achieve the sports programs' objectives.

Tuliao and Carag (2020) found the sports program in the Philippines needs to be fully supported financially; thus, there is a need to increase funding support for sports programs to produce significant results. Callanta (2008) discussed that funds and resources for the sports program would be needed, which can help the student-athletes become competitive in sports and tournaments.

In the Department of Education of Panabo City Division, Davao del Norte, Philippines, it has been observed that some educational leaders from their schools do not sufficiently support some athletes in terms of athletic uniforms to athletes' equipment, and basic needs as more student-athletes in public schools rely on their coaches. Moreover, some teacher coaches are not Physical Education (PE) majors and are demanded to handle specific sports; thus, most need to properly train the student-athletes since they need to gain the knowledge and skills to do so. As a PE instructor, the researcher has observed that most student-athletes in the athlete sections are not academically inclined; thus, most get low scores, especially in core subject areas.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the experiences of the educational leaders in handling student-athletes of the Department of Education of the Division of Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Philippines. The research questions, are as follows:

1. What are the setbacks of educational leaders in handling student-athletes?
2. How do educational leaders cope with the setbacks they encounter in handling student-athletes?
3. What are the insights of educational leaders in handling student-athletes?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on the General Systems Theory (GST) proposed initially by Hungarian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. He suggested that the connections of its components consider a system. It defines the concept of a system, where "all systems are characterized by a combination of parts whose relations make them interdependent. The systems approach is quickly applied to the study of organizations which has essential effects on organizational behavior and structure (and vice versa).

Furthermore, this study is also anchored on the theory of the Comparative Approach in Management by Ernest Dale in 1959. This approach is used by the empirical school, which means that this is a study of experience to draw generalizations about knowledge transfer and teaching experience. This theory is founded on the idea that the most efficient management strategies are understood and applied by studying the experiences of accomplished managers, the errors made in management, or attempting to solve management problems. As it is often used, this technique suggests that the student or practitioner could replicate the results in similar cases by learning what worked and did not in specific situations.

From the lens of General Systems Theory, this study on handling student-athletes is perceived as a system composed of interrelated elements. Handling student-athletes is more challenged by different factors than is given interventions. The coping strategies function as the inputs and processes in this study. The insights serve as the lessons acquired that serve as outputs or outcomes of the study.

From the lens of a Comparative Approach in Management, this study on handling student athletes draws generalizations from the experiences of educational leaders. The comparative approach determines the applicability and combination of information to solve specific problems in the field by drawing inferences

from experiences. These experiences include setbacks, coping strategies, and insights.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used the qualitative research design, precisely the phenomenological approach. This research design produced non-numerical data that sought to answer problems that could not be acknowledged numerically. It aimed at documenting the experiences of educational managers in handling student-athletes that revolved around challenges, coping strategies, and insights.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Panabo City Division, Davao del Norte, Philippines. It has 15 secondary schools with sports programs, as the Department of Education mandates this. This study used an interview with the school heads of the top three (3) most prominent secondary schools in terms of the student population, namely: Panabo City NHS, AO Floirendo NHS, and San Vicente NHS; and other seven (7) schools, namely: Kasilak NHS, Manay NHS, Cagangohan NHS, Little Panay NHS, Kauswagan NHS, Sindaton NHS, and Southern Davao NHS of the Division of Panabo City. The rest have yet to respond to the request for interviews.

Informants and Participants Selection

The ten (10) educational managers were purposively chosen as informants in this study. They are the school heads who also serve as sports managers who handle the sports programs in their respective schools in Panabo City Division. Aside from overseeing the sports program, they also directly monitor the over-all sports related activities of the student-athletes. They have been in the service for more than four years, providing significant experience in sports program implementation. They know the ups and downs of the sports program better than anyone else in school.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide was developed. It was validated by one school principal, one master teacher, and one education program supervisor. A set of interview guide with one (1) grand tour question composed of three (3) sub-questions was prepared. The questions elicited responses regarding the setbacks faced by the school heads, coping strategies, and insights.

Before the research instrument was used in the field, it was piloted to three school heads who were not included in the IDI. The purpose of the pilot interview was to ensure that the questions would generate plausible answers during the interview. Then, an Interview Analysis Sheet was prepared to create a set of analytic notes to accompany each interview.

Data Gathering Procedures

An In-Depth Interview (IDI) was used to gather reliable and accurate information about the experiences of educational managers in handling student-athletes. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher sought permission from the concerned authorities. Face-to-face interviews were used, except for one who opted to send her responses through email. Proper protocol was observed as the interviews were done amidst the pandemic. During the day of the interviews, all informants agreed to be interviewed as indicated in their individual informed consent. The interviews were tape-recorded as this tool could help the researcher gather the information accurately. The interviews started with a social conversation to create a relaxing and trusting

atmosphere. Each interview was completed in 30-45 minutes. The interviews ended with a concluding “thank you message” from the researcher and an agreement that the researcher would be allowed to do follow-up interviews if needed. The informants confirmed transcripts and data interpretation when these were returned to them. Follow-up interviews were done to saturate data through an online platform.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed Moustakas’s most accepted phenomenological data analysis framework (1994). This framework includes preparing data for analysis, reducing the data phenomenologically, engaging in imaginative variation, and uncovering the essence of the experience. The process began with the researcher’s writing a complete description of the phenomenon. In short, transcripts were prepared in this step. The phenomenological reduction started with horizontalizing or listing all relevant expressions. In this part, all significant statements related to the experiences of educational managers in handling student-athletes were organized using a spreadsheet application. Significant statements were translated into English. Irrelevant, repetitive, and redundant data were ignored. After cleaning the data, the remaining parts of the data were put in “horizons”. After horizontalization, the reduction of experiences to the invariant constitutes was made. In this step, the translated horizons were clustered into themes. In this study, the translated horizons were clustered into setbacks, coping strategies, and insights of educational leaders in handling student-athletes.

Then, thematic clustering followed to create core themes. Four (4) core themes were identified in each major theme.

This study did not include a comparison of multiple data sources as part of Moustaka’s framework, as this study did not do focus-group discussions.

After identifying the horizons, core themes, and major themes, individual textural descriptions of informants were constructed. The textural description is a narrative that explains participants’ perceptions of a phenomenon. In this step, the verbatim excerpts of the informants on their experiences in handling student-athletes were transcribed. The meaningful units were also explained in a narrative format to facilitate an understanding of the informants’ experiences.

This next step was the construction of individual structural descriptions based on the textural descriptions and imaginative variation. The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meanings by utilizing imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the “how” that speaks of conditions illuminating the “what” of experience.

From here, the construction of composite structural descriptions was made. This step incorporated textural descriptions into a structure explaining how the experience occurred. The structures were added at the end of each paragraph to create a structural description. This process helped the researcher understand the informants’ experiences with the phenomenon under investigation.

The last step in the data analysis was synthesizing the texture and structure into an expression. The composite structural description was synthesized into a composite textural description to create a universal description of the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of the step was to reach the essence of the experience of the phenomenon. This step was the synthesis of all the narratives for the group. The composite narratives were written in the third person perspective representing the group.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted using verbal and written consent forms. A written communication was prepared to request approval for the conduct of the research and to seek endorsement from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS). Additionally, each informant received and signed a letter outlining the study and a consent form for participation. All informants were assured of their confidentiality. The researcher retained all transcripts, notes, and an audio recorder.

RESULT

Setbacks of Educational Leaders in Handling Student Athletes

Insufficient Sports Equipment and Practice Facilities

Sports equipment and practice *facilities* are used to prepare teams for a season or throughout a *game* week to prepare for sports events. This investigation shows that defective sports equipment and practice facilities are one of the setbacks faced by educational leaders.

Limited School Funds

Sports programs should have a budget. The budget supports all sports activities. The funding will eventually meet the financial requirements of the sports program, like the purchase of sports equipment and practice facilities, remuneration for coaches and other workforce involved, and different sports program needs. In this inquiry, educational leaders expressed that they have limited school funds for the sports program.

Inadequate Coaches' Skills Training

Coaches play vital roles since they are responsible for planning, organizing, and delivering an appropriate range of sports activities and programs for individuals and teams. Their typical responsibility includes teaching relevant skills, tactics, and techniques. However, this study discloses that educational leaders are concerned about coaches' inadequate training to improve their coaching skills. The primary reason for this is that coaches are not inclined to sports, but the circumstances force them to fill in the position of being a coach due to the absence of skilled coaches in the school.

Student Athletes' Low Academic Achievement and Misbehavior

One of the problems educational leaders encounter in handling student-athletes is low academic achievement and misbehavior. Student-athletes neglect their intellectual engagement because they are often complacent as school athletes.

Handling student-athletes is challenging for educational leaders in any academic learning environment. This study highlighted that educational leaders need more equipment, facilities, school funds, and coaches' skills training. The student-athletes have low academic performance and misbehavior. However, these setbacks allow educational leaders to continue developing student-athletes into globally competitive athletes. Educational leaders exert all means to find solutions to the setbacks at hand.

Coping Strategies of Educational Leaders in Handling Student Athletes

Internal Fund Allocation

Internal funds are fund sources found within the school's assets and revenues. To address insufficient sports

equipment and practice facilities, education leaders allocate additional budget for these from their internal funds. They do this since they believe that using the right and good equipment will give student-athletes an upper hand in the upcoming competitions that the Sports Management sets.

Resource Generation

Budget sourcing is one of the essential processes in finance that can address the challenges in handling student-athletes. This budget sourcing helps the school find more funding to support the school sports program. The participants affirmed that aside from the school sports fund, the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and LGU help the school financially. Supportive members of the PTA help the school find resources for training and practice. The LGU, on the other hand, allows the school to procure sophisticated equipment since they have already allocated funds for schools' sports programs. However, this can only be done with the partnership and agreement of the school, the parent-teacher association, and the local government unit.

Coaches Skills Development Program

Coaches can only give what they have. Inadequately trained coaches are more likely to experience poor performance in sports. To resolve this setback, educational leaders send their coaches to training courses, seminars, and meetings related to sports.

Student-Athletes Development Program

A Student-Athlete Development Program is committed to empowering student-athletes to become self-sufficient, productive, and responsible citizens. It provides opportunities for academic, athletics, career, community, and personal success. Educational leaders shared that they develop a development program to address student athletes' low academic performance and misbehavior. Low academic performance is handled by constant follow-up and checking on their academic performances. At the same time, misconduct is addressed by putting behavioral experts like coaches and teachers to look out for students' behavior.

Educational leaders always find solutions when a crisis occurs. In summary, educational leaders make coping strategies for handling student-athletes. Schools allocate additional funds from their internal resources to procure sports equipment and practice facilities needed during training. In addition to that, they source funds from their support arm like the parents' and teachers' associations and local government units. Educational leaders send assigned coaches to the skills training program to fully equip them with skills, tactics, and techniques. Student-athletes have a student development program to balance their soft and hard skills. As educational leaders, they consider setbacks part of the organization to which they need to find solutions with internal and external stakeholders.

Insights of Educational Leaders in Handling Student Athletes

Well-funded Sports Program Produces Better Results

This insight means that well-funded sports programs turn out positive results. All needs are met to make student-athletes achieve and perform well in competitions. An informant stated that by providing student-athletes with the needed resources, the student-athletes also bring about satisfactory results.

Stakeholders Sustain Financial Performance

While not all schools can financially provide for student-athlete needs, seeking assistance from the stakeholders is a sound decision. An informant stated that stakeholders like local government units and parents could sustain the financial performance that a school lacks. Moreover, an informant added that they

get financial assistance from PTA funds provided by the parents to support school activities, especially sports. A participant added that since the school lacks practice facilities like a gym, they seek help from the barangay or LGU. Also, most of their equipment are sponsored by a barangay or LGU.

Competent Coaches Bring out Winnable Student Athletes

Talented human resources like coaches yield winnable student-athletes. By making the coaches join training and seminars, they become effective in their respective sports fields. The informants revealed that coaches could produce national-level athletes because coaches train student-athletes based on quality, not quantity. Coaches can also inspire their student-athletes by effectively supporting and motivating them; thus, student-athletes can strive hard in their chosen skills.

Success of Student-Athletes Comes from Balancing Sports and Academics

In schools, sports management is a critical discipline whose goal is to guarantee that student-athletes or sports players are well-versed in sports and academics. An informant narrated that to be successful in the long run; students should do diligent training in sports and work hard in academics. It follows that student-athletes who are motivated and adequately trained to boost their interest and personality; thus, they improve their athletic and academic performance.

An informant added that student-athletes should enhance their fitness and discipline to improve academic achievement. By giving student-athletes the needed support, student-athletes become resilient in dealing with setbacks.

Educational leaders see things intuitively and act on these. In summary, this study encapsulates insights of educational leaders in handling student-athletes. Student-athletes are likelier to produce better results when a sports program is well-supported and funded. Since not all schools can provide the needs of sports programs, stakeholders like LGUs and parents sustain the school's finances and act as support. Well-trained coaches bring out the best in students because they are well-versed in their field since they have enough training and seminars. Consequently, students' success in this field is determined by balancing both sports and academics. These insights may serve as tips to educational leaders in solving different problems regarding sports programs.

DISCUSSION

Setbacks of Educational Leaders in Handling Student Athletes

Insufficient Sports Equipment and Practice Facilities

Sports equipment and practice *facilities* are used to prepare teams for a season or throughout a *game* week for sports events. This investigation shows that insufficient sports equipment and practice facilities are some of the setbacks faced by educational leaders. The informants revealed that most of the school's equipment is acquired by donation or sponsorship by the Local Government Units (LGUs). Talabi (1998), cited in the study of Diejomaoh, Akarah, and Tayire (2015), affirmed that top-of-the-line equipment and facilities are needed to achieve world-class status in sports. He said most developing countries want to catch up with developed countries in sports overnight, but this will be challenging. While developed countries invest heavily in building excellent facilities, supplying standard equipment, and creating welcoming environments for their athletes, developing countries need all catch went on to say that one place where there seems to be a weak start is the provision of standard facilities/equipment, with the few that have been given being outdated, non-functional, or substandard. In addition, Torres et al. (2018) stated that it would be worthwhile

to concentrate on good sports material that could at least partially solve insufficiency issues and be ideally suited for use in PE classes and regular student-athlete training. Moreover, according to Jeroh (2012), sportsmen and women need a favorable atmosphere to practice and compete, which includes sufficient and well-prepared facilities, equipment and materials, good coaching, and medical care. The enthusiasm, determination, and will to succeed typical of experienced athletes will only be present if these basics are present.

Insufficiency of sports equipment and practice facilities is a common setback in programs, projects, and activities. The same with the findings of the study, educational leaders also expressed the same dilemma. Since sports program is designed to develop student athletes' physical, mental, and social abilities, there is a need for the school to create a better sports development program. One important dimension to be prioritized in this sports development program is the provision of sports equipment and practice facilities. It is the role of the leaders to include these in the school's regular budget. Leaders have to bear in mind that these resources impact student athletes' performance, as found by several studies.

Limited School Funds

Sports programs should have a budget. The budget supports all sports activities. The funding will eventually meet the financial requirements of the sports program, like the purchase of sports equipment and practice facilities, remuneration for coaches and other workforce involved, and different sports program needs. In this inquiry, educational leaders expressed that they have limited school funds for the sports program.

Botha (2013) stated that a lack of financial resources makes it difficult for a school to obtain a high-quality education and how much more supporting the sports program. The situation worsens when funds are misappropriated. Schools, like every other organization, have a set of priorities and objectives. Schools have to manage the funds properly managed to achieve their goals. Aina (2017) further explored that understanding what school financial management means and adhering to school needs (e.g., sports program, physical needs) when making financial decisions are essential for successful school financial management. Further, Mestry (2013) expressed that the performance of managerial activities associated with schools' economic phases to provide quality education should be funded right for the activities to achieve their objectives.

Studies show that budget concerns are just one factor contributing to why a small number of schools are eliminating *sports programs*. But in this study, a limited budget continues the schools pursuing their sports programs as they believe their efforts will produce better persons. Limited resources compel leaders to become resourceful. In such situations, the leaders should devise a budget plan for the sports program. The budget plan allows leaders to determine in advance whether there will be enough money to do what is needed or what the school likes to do. This way gives an idea of where to adjust the expenditures.

Inadequate Coaches' Skills Training

Coaches play vital roles since they are responsible for planning, organizing, and delivering an appropriate range of sports activities and programs for individuals and teams. Their typical responsibility includes teaching relevant skills, tactics, and techniques. However, this study found that educational leaders must be more concerned with coaches' inadequate skills training to improve their coaching skills. The primary reason for this is that coaches are not inclined to sports but are forced by the circumstances to fill in the position in the absence of skilled coaches in the school.

The study of Smith and Cushion (2006) affirmed that coaches' skills training necessitates acquiring, integrating, and developing skills with the help of coaching courses and experience gained from

involvement in sports activities as an athlete and as a coach. This method is highly reliant on the competitive level of their participants. It was further discussed by Jones et al. (2003 as cited by Serrano et al., 2013) that a core tenet of coaching is to improve team or athlete results, which necessitates a cognitive activity to make decisions based on a variety of complex situational factors. Moreover, coaches must make dynamic decisions due to their work's adverse and unstable circumstances, necessitating strategic action strategies accompanied by an intense activity of reflection, judgment, and execution. Nelson et al. (2006) articulated that, according to analysis, current formal education systems need to train coaches for their job correctly.

Coaches are essential in developing, improving, or promoting student athletes' abilities and understanding. They work with other persons or groups of people to build student-athletes using sports in their development. With their vital role, they should be the first to be fully capacitated. But this study revealed the need for more skills among coaches. Leaders cannot be blamed for assigning coaches unprepared for sports because of schools' shortage of skilled coaches. What leaders can do on this is to come up with a development program for coaches. Enough backup plans, knowledge, and techniques of the coaches help the students when confronted with a problem.

Student Athletes' Low Academic Achievement and Misbehavior

One of the problems educational leaders encounter in handling student-athletes is low academic achievement and misbehavior. The student-athletes neglect their academics by being complacent, believing they are essential as school athletes.

The result of this study corroborated Duderstadt's (2003) study that student-athletes, on the other hand, can be considered a group at risk for academic underachievement. Student-athletes confront various problems that can make staying motivated to succeed academically tricky. Students with a more challenging time balancing the demands of sports involvement are likelier to fail academically and lose their eligibility to compete at a certain level. Furthermore, Simons et al. (1999, as cited by Anderson, C. M. 2010) expressed that students who participate in sports are obliged to practice for at least 25 hours per week and face challenges such as exhaustion, injury, stigmatization, and social isolation as a result of their participation. Due to their athletic competition schedule, student-athletes frequently struggle to attend classes regularly while their sport is in season.

Holistic development means the development of intellectual, mental, physical, emotional, and social abilities in learners so that they can face the demands and challenges of everyday life. Students are sent to school for them to have holistic development. Engaging in sports is only one component of their holistic development. It implies that educational leaders, mentors, and student-athletes have to teach in their minds that athletes have to value academics and character as they value sports. Educational leaders must create a specialized development plan for student-athletes to balance academics and sports.

Coping Strategies of Educational Leaders in Handling Student–Athletes

Internal Fund Allocation

Internal funds are funding sources found within the school's assets and revenues. To address insufficient sports equipment and practice facilities, education leaders allocate additional budget for these from their internal funds. They do this since they believe that using the right and good equipment will give student-athletes an upper hand in the upcoming competitions that the Sports Management sets. The informant revealed that having a complete set of sports equipment and facilities would make the student-athletes more efficient and relevant during matches.

Mestry (2016) posited establishing the school governance team's and managers' financial management roles. It is also critical that the school's economic role players have the requisite background skills to fulfill their financial management responsibilities. Rangongo, Mohlakwana, and Beckman (2016) mentioned that most financial mismanagement in public schools is caused by a lack of financial management skills and proficiency, inadequate knowledge of policies, insufficient monitoring, and control of funds, as well as lack of integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness.

In sports programs, proper budgeting and management of finances make a difference. A well-budgeted program has a well-planned goal. However, when there are internal power struggles between educational managers, the allocation of resources will be distorted. Financial management needs cooperation, skills, knowledge, and proficiency in handling accounts to allocate funds appropriately. On the other hand, educational leaders influence lobbying for the additional internal fund for this purpose.

Resource Generation

Budget sourcing is one of the essential processes in finance that can address the challenges in handling student-athletes. It will help the school find more funding to support its sports program. The participants affirmed that aside from the school sports fund, the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and the LGU help with the school's finances.

In the study of Du Toit, Erasmus, and Strydom (2010), they clarified that financial management includes procurement and application of funds. In a school context, acquiring funds from different sources ensures that required funds are available (i.e., income). Implementation entails determining how available financial resources will be used (i.e., the distribution of funds: the expenditure). Principals, in collaboration with all other stakeholders, make decisions on income and expenses about the school's overall needs. But according to Cebekhulu (2015), in some cases, many rural parents and stakeholders need to participate in solving school financial management problems. Mestry (2004) discussed that even in situations where principals lack appropriate financial management skills and are unable to resolve realistic solutions to practical financial matters, there are still stakeholders who ignore how principals manage financially even though the problems are already noticeable.

Most public schools need more financial capacity to provide for the sports program since other parts of the school also need finances. Collaborating with stakeholders to generate funds is an example of the right solution to solve the critical problem of a sports program. As an educational leader, getting sponsors to support the sports program is a good option since stakeholders like big companies are nearby. However, some do not care about academic matters; thus, forming a linkage with them and creating a good rapport with them is an achievement of the sports program and the whole school. Aside from seeking financial assistance from parents, teachers, and local government units, there are still many other resource mobilization strategies the leaders can do. This context entails charisma.

Coaches Skills Development Program

Coaches can only give what they have. Inadequately trained coaches are more likely to experience poor performance in sports. To resolve this setback, educational leaders send their coaches to training courses, seminars, and meetings related to sports.

As Jones et al. (2003, as cited by Serrano et al., 2013) discussed, becoming an expert coach is influenced much more by their interactive, situational coaching experiences, observations of peers, and knowledge sharing with other coaches than any professional preparation programs. Mesquita et al. (2010) offered a new concept of coaching education based on coaching contexts. It should be invented and implemented to

expose coaches and athletes to relevant and optimum learning experiences.

Individuals cannot give what they do not have, and they cannot impart what they do not possess. That is why it is equally vital for an educational leader to develop comprehensive skills development training for coaches. This includes internal and external training courses and seminars that can make them a master of their craft. In doing so, coaches would be competent in handling student-athletes since they have what they need to manage student-athletes.

Student- Athletes' Development Program

A Student-Athlete Development Program is committed to empowering student-athletes to become self-sufficient, productive, and responsible citizens and providing opportunities for academic, athletic, career, community, and personal success. Educational leaders shared that they develop a development program to address student athletes' low academic performance and misbehavior. Low academic performance is handled by constant follow-up and checking on their academic performances. At the same time, misconduct is addressed by putting behavioral experts like coaches and teachers to look out for students' behavior.

Horn & Smith (2018) believe that student athletes' response to a development program somehow forecasts success. Successful athletic performance has always been linked to the answer to the development plan of student-athletes. Versari (2004, as cited by Lopez & Santelices, 2012) concluded that there is a link between student athletes' responses to the development plan and some aspects of sports performance. As further affirmed by Anshel (2011), individuals' reactions to a stimulus (e.g., sports development programs, school activities) are features that are usually referred to as "features of persons that predispose people to react in certain ways in specific types of situations". As an athlete's response to a stimulus determines how they will perform in future situations, these attributes may characterize an individual's future personality and characteristics.

As educational leaders, they should maintain sight of the holistic development of student-athletes. While student-athletes are in it for the sports training, they should also do what is expected of them as a student. They should consult experts both in academics and in sports. Guidance and discipline have to go hand in hand to attain a positive attitude and better academic and sports performance.

Insights of Educational Leaders in Handling Student Athletes

Well-funded Sports Program Produces Better Results

It explicitly means that a well-funded sports program turns out positive results. All needs are met, which leads student-athletes to achieve and perform well in competitions.

According to the study of Harris (1996), as cited by Thenga (2012) budget has veto power over the entire cycle of school activities. Budgetary control is a continual process in which schools evaluate and change budgetary goals throughout the fiscal year. Makhubela (2005) has the same take on funding sports programs and posited that effective financial management would ensure the school's goals and objectives are met. If the proper budgetary procedures are not followed, the school's needs will not be met. This means that the needs of the school determine the school's budget. All stakeholders submit the school's needs, but the educational leaders and the finance committee manage the funds. Kruger (2003) also affirmed that organizing school finances typically begins with creating a budget. Makhubela (2005) further discussed that the budget is characterized as a planning tool that helps prevent educational programs from being disrupted due to a lack of or exhaustion of resources.

While athletes are the heart of the sports program and educational leaders and coaches are the mind, the

arms are the finances. By satisfactorily supporting the components of the sports program, better results will be produced since it takes away one of the setbacks that tie down the student-athletes and coaches. This study revealed that funding the sports program affects its results; thus, as an educational leader who wants to achieve more in this domain, it is a sound decision to allocate finances to be invested in the sports program.

Stakeholders Sustain Financial Performance

While not all schools can financially provide for student-athletes needs, seeking assistance from stakeholders is a sound decision. An informant stated that stakeholders like the local government unit and parents could sustain the financial performance that a school lack.

Drayer (2011) stated that in many countries, most sports facilities are maintained by local government bodies. However, state and federal funds sponsor huge facilities with significant mega-events. Further, Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2017) noticed that because the government is an essential source of money for many countries, it plays a vital role in the development and construction of sports facilities, both local government facilities and larger stadia that support professional leagues and significant or major sporting events. Also, Coakley et al. (2011) stated that governments frequently own and administer the public property on which these facilities are developed, in addition to construction finance, which is generally obtained through budget sourcing from stakeholders and general-private partnership commercial arrangements.

Studies show that stakeholders contribute to the sustainability of financial performance. The present study also indicates that stakeholders strengthen the school sports program by supporting it financially. Most school resources, like equipment, are sponsored by the stakeholders, whether from PTA or the government. Educational leaders perceive that stakeholders have a big part in the success of their sports program. Against this background, educational leaders can still expand their connections with other stakeholders, not only with the government but with private and non-government organizations in and outside the country.

Competent Coaches Bring out Winnable Student Athletes

Competent human resources like coaches yield winnable student-athletes. By making the coaches join training and seminars, they can become effective in their respective sports fields. The informants revealed that coaches could produce national-level athletes because coaches train student-athletes according to quality, not quantity.

Bruner et al. (2011) found that coaches are well-known for playing an essential role in the lives of young athletes and for having the ability to affect their sporting experiences positively or negatively. This was reinforced in the study of Rhind and Jowett (2010) by the following premises: that positive sports outcomes are linked to the quality of coaches and that students' relationship with coaches brings out the best in the students. Abraham et al. 2006; Gilbert et al., 2006; Martindale et al., 2007) confirmed that the coaches' ability to successfully facilitate the athletes' sports growth and the quality of sports training affects the totality of the sports program.

Educational leaders admit that competent coaches bring out winnable athletes. They believe that it is a must for them also to equip the coaches as they contribute largely to the performance of the student-athletes. With this idea in mind, it is a must for them to let their coaches undergo a specialized skills training development program. A corresponding budget must be appropriated for this matter.

Success of Student-Athletes Comes from Balancing Sports and Academics

In schools, sports management is a critical discipline whose goal is to guarantee that student-athletes or

sports players are well-versed in sports and academics. An informant narrated that becoming successful in the long run comes from diligent training in sports and hard work in academics. He added that student-athletes should be better in more than one but in both.

As discussed by Rothschild-Checroune (2012), participating in a varsity athletic program necessitates a significant amount of time and effort to meet the expectations of practices, meetings, training, film sessions, and games, adding additional strains to first-year students attempting to adjust to school life in general. These demanding activities can limit a student athlete's academic involvement and, as a result, significantly impact academic performance. Harris et al. (2015) explored another domain that may hinder or help students balance academic and sports domains. They found that parents, coaches, and educational leaders may help their student-athletes succeed academically and athletically by encouraging them. Such focus increases student athletes' self-efficacy in both domains and emphasizes the relevance of their overall academic experience.

Balanced student life prepares student-athletes to overcome the challenges that await them after school. While they are still in school, the appropriate student service program helps them achieve better, if not their best, in all aspects of student life. Hence, educational leaders are responsible for crafting a student development program that develops their whole being.

Implication to Knowledge

Published studies closely related to the experiences of educational leaders in handling students are limited. Most of these studies center on the life of student-athletes. This study, therefore, is another aspect that can add to the body of knowledge in educational management, specifically on resource management. The study findings provide a more comprehensive perspective among educational leaders in handling student athletes influenced by different factors. This study revealed that human, financial, and physical resources have something to do with handling student-athletes. This study also enlightens educational leaders that there are strategies for solving setbacks creatively and innovatively. This study inspires educational leaders that despite the challenges, handling student-athletes have rewarding aspects. The study's findings may also serve as a basis for crafting policy on sports management. Paper presentation and publication of this paper may add to the related studies and literature on sports management.

Implications for Practice

This study depicts the actual scenario of a typical government-funded basic education learning system. In every school's development effort, risks always need to be managed. In this study, educational leaders can show their management capability in handling student-athletes. Resource mobilization and human resource development programs are among their paramount strategies. Yet, they can explore other creative and innovative approaches to sustain their sports program.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings revealed educational leaders' first-hand experiences in handling student-athletes. Future researchers may use the results to come up with more extensive research. The study's qualitative findings may be used to develop a survey instrument to determine the practices of educational leaders in the sports program. Aside from the descriptive analysis, future researchers may conduct a study that will predict student-athlete performance. Aside from the study's factors, other factors that will significantly influence student athletes' performance may be explored. It's also good to explore other management components to add to the body of knowledge on the management of sports programs.

This study encourages educational leaders of the Department of Education to come up with a quality

management system for sports programs. This system may include plans, programs, projects, activities, and policies that can improve the management of sports programs. The method may also consider funding and workforce requirements. This study may inspire educational leaders to strengthen their development program for coaches and student-athletes and improve their physical facilities for the holistic development of their learners. If budget warrants, coaches and student-athletes may be given additional rewards and incentives for every accomplishment that they receive to inspire them in their engagement with sports. Monitoring and evaluation by educational leaders are equally essential to provide them with feedback for future planning. Educational leaders must continually establish strong partnerships with the community and the parents to support the sustainability of the sports program. A partnership may include not only local but also national and international stakeholders.

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