High School Athletic Directors and Educational Leadership Traits: A Conceptual Analysis of the Literature*

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Abstract

In this review of literature, we analyzed the salient references concerning athletics and athletic directors. Educational leadership traits including organization and planning, decision making and problem solving, communication, and evaluation were explored. The substantial influence that athletics has on students including participation figures and benefits of participation was examined along with the literature relevant to the historical roles and responsibilities of athletic directors. Finally, the review of literature included how perceptions of leadership for athletic directors influenced organizational climate, shared vision, and situational leadership abilities.

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1 Introduction

Athletic participation numbers are increasing; consequently, athletic department leaders must perform numerous roles and responsibilities within the school program. In most high schools, athletics is the largest nonacademic program available for student involvement (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Because of the large number of students who are involved and the increasing abundance of duties under the athletic director's control, interscholastic athletic directors are in a position that calls for numerous leadership behaviors (Read, 2000). The athletic director's perception of the relative importance of these leadership behaviors is sometimes different from the superintendent's perception of the same activities. Regardless of whether these behaviors are perceived as intended, most athletic directors understand the importance of educational performance (Smith, 1993) and the influence that climate can have on this performance. Because research identifying specific leadership traits of high school athletic directors is almost nonexistent, this literature review begins with a brief summary of general educational leadership traits. The topics of students influenced, established roles and responsibilities, and perceptions of leadership are then presented as they related directly to athletics and athletic directors.

2 Educational Leadership Traits

The documentation of educational leadership traits for high school athletic directors is scarce. However, the traits of organization, decision making and problem solving, planning, communication, and evaluation have been substantiated as important traits for school leaders to maintain. As school leaders, athletic directors must have these same abilities to be successful.

2.1 Organization and Planning

Planning for an effective school program is necessary to achieve the results desired in the district's strategic plan. One type of planning that has dominated school administration is strategic planning. Strategic planning has been mandated by state and accrediting agencies but has often been conducted without identifiable results. Consequently, excessive comprehensive planning has taken on negative connotations (Beach & Lindahl, 2004). For planning to be effective, flexibility needs to be present within the plan (Beach & Lindahl, 2007). Planning must be integrated into the school improvement process and become a "managerial function that must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each school" (Beach & Lindahl, 2007, p. 20). Developing a plan is only the first step as creating processes to implement the plan are equally vital. Change is a constant in schools; however, planning for all changes and improvements is not necessary. Routine changes are already covered by schools having a number of strategies and processes established (Beach & Lindahl, 2007).

One critical area that must be planned is the school budget. The school leader must use the district's strategic plan to provide structure for the budget (Grant, 2004). Athletic programs are often questioned when budget considerations are made. School leaders can protect themselves personally and take pressure off the school board by using the strategic plan developed by the community to make these decisions.

2.2 Decision Making and Problem Solving

Schools are a dynamic, shifting, and evolving environment that gives rise to a nearly continuous stream of decision making opportunities (Tuten, 2006). Owens (2001) described decision making as, "... the heart of the organization and administration" (p. 264). Pressures of running a school program come from numerous sources. Forces from external sources include demands from specific policies from special interest groups, increasing intervention and accountability from federal, state, and local governments, increased public expectations of schools, and specific social and economic problems in the community (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In response to these circumstances, leaders must actively engage in solving problems to continue effective organizational functioning (Samier, 2002). The school's climate and culture are, in part, determined by

the outcomes associated with the decisions made by its leaders (Lindsay, Halfacre, & Welch, 2004; Thomas & Bainbridge, 2002).

The decision making situations encountered by athletic directors are not unlike those situations faced by principals. Hoy and Tarter (2004) provided a model for understanding the various scenarios requiring a decision that arise in schools. They outlined four types of decision situations faced by principals. First, principals face situations where the problem is specific and the information needed to address the problem is complete. As a result, the decision is relatively simple to make. Second, principals face situations where the problem is not overly complex but, because of time constraints or other limitations, less information is available. This lack of information causes the leader to make a decision with incomplete or imperfect information. Third, principals face problems where guiding policy exists for action. However, the information surrounding the problem is incomplete or imperfect, the decision is complex, and the outcomes are uncertain. The fourth and final situation includes incomplete information, complex decisions, uncertain outcomes, and no guiding policies or principles. These situations create circumstances where principals must make short-term solutions until policy can be established.

Decision making is an important conflict resolution tool. Decision making influences the "planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and controlling of the organization" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 155). As such, it allows the members of the school system to resolve differences before the educational process is damaged (Nye & Capelluti, 2003).

2.3 Communication

Communication is an important tool for all educational administrators. Shields (2004) identified three critical steps for leaders to understand when considering effective communication. First, administrators must remember that they have a privileged position allowing them a lot of information. The administrators must assist others without all this information in understanding decisions and directives. Second, administrators must provide conditions that facilitate dialogue among diverse and marginalized groups. Finally, these conditions must devise strategies for dismantling practices that keep all groups from participating. Successful administrators must actively engage all groups because successful collaboration will not happen by chance.

School officials must first be able to communicate effectively with the members of the school system. They must then be able to communicate with stakeholders outside the system. Most of this communication comes through conversation. Isaacs (1999) identified a set of three powerful conversational practices including debate, dialogue, and open discussion. Debate, also called unproductive defensiveness, often limits subordinate empowerment. Dialogue and open discussion are essential to creating change.

Isaacs (1999) suggested four conversational practices that help leaders generate more open communication. Those practices were deep listening, respecting others, suspending assumptions, and voicing personal truths. Deep listening requires the leader to try actively to understand a speaker's views and understand the topic being discussed. Leaders must learn to respect others' views as legitimate and set aside their own assumptions prior to the conversation. When administrators communicate their own views, it is important that they represent them as subjective rather than objective fact.

In dealing with expectations of outside groups, it is important that school leaders understand how to forge relationships with individuals and groups. Even when groups may have divergent expectations, mutual respect that will keep the line of communication open must be present. It is critical that people and their perceptions are given consideration (Grant, 2004).

2.4 Evaluation

School leaders must be able to allocate human, financial, and material resources effectively and this allocation must occur in a way that is measurable (Hoyle, Fenwick, & Steffy, 1985). The first step in a fair evaluation process is to have clear and explicit explanations of job expectations (Tucker, 2001). Most individuals want to meet or exceed expectations. Effectively describing school system norms prevent misunderstandings among staff and help staff members accept judgments about performance based on these standards. After expectations are made explicit, the normal observation and feedback process can occur.

If a problem is observed, verbal correction is usually the first step in the correction cycle. If the problem persists, Tucker (2001) identified six components of an assistance plan that should be used: a definition of the problem, a statement of objectives, intervention strategies, a timeline, procedures to collect data, and a final judgment. Tucker also reminded administrators that "what works for one teacher will not necessarily work for others, even in the same school or with similar problems" (p. 53). Though termination may be the final judgment, Tucker (1997) documented that far more teachers meet their plans' goals than not.

Evaluation often identifies failures in an organization. School administrators must be able to learn from failures as well as from successes (Rerup, 2003). Rerup also pointed out that researching these grey areas requires courage, diligence, imagination, reflection, a high degree of mindfulness, and a willingness to ask the hard questions, even when things are going well. School leaders must collect and analyze these data because most failures and near-failures go unreported (Latchem, 2005).

In the athletics arena, the only performance feedback a coach may receive is game results (MacLean & Chelladurai, 1995). This sole focus on winning or losing is often unfair because coaching is such a multi-faceted profession. According to Sabock (1985), all facets of the job should be considered when evaluating a coach's performance. MacLean and Chelladurai agreed and argued for evaluations not to be based solely on performance outcomes. A loss could easily be caused by an opponent's extraordinary performance or the mistake of a sports official (Chelladurai & Reimer, 1997). It becomes difficult to determine whether the person or situation is being evaluated if emphasis is placed solely on results (MacLean & Chelladurai, 1995). As athletic directors evaluate coaches, the most important success factor of a coach, according to Martens (1987), is to help athletes improve their athletic skill.

Duquin and Tomayko (1985) described the evaluation of coaching performance as a basic management function of the athletic director. An appraisal system formulated for full-time head athletic coaches at NCAA Division II institutions by Gorney and Ness (2000) yielded 20 comprehensive categories. These categories are: (a) primary focus on intercollegiate athletics is educational, (b) leads by example, (c) is a role model, (d) academic achievement of student athletes, (e) organizational ability, (f) goal setting, (g) professional development, (h) team management, (i) dedication to the game, (j) recruiting, (k) professional and interpersonal relations, (l) communication, (m) compliance, (n) knowledge of the sport, (o) applied coaching methods, (p) evaluation, (q) understands that competition is important in American society and that winning is important, (r) fund raising, (s) administrative performance, and (t) public relations and experience.

Knorr (1989) also stated that a major task of every athletic administrator is the annual review of all athletic department personnel. Knorr suggested 12 reminders for athletic directors: (a) The purpose of the evaluation should be first and foremost concerned with job performance improvement; (b) Evaluation must be carried out in a positive fashion; (c) Criteria used in evaluation should be arrived at through a consensus of all parties involved in the process; (d) Criteria stated in the job description should be consistent with the criteria used in the evaluation; (e) Understanding the traits of successful coaches is an important element in the development of job performance criteria; (f) The key personnel in the evaluation process are the athletic administrator and the coach; (g) The evaluation process must start at time of hiring by communication of expectations and responsibilities; (h) Formative evaluation is an important element of evaluation and is ongoing and informal; (i) Self-evaluation is important and should be provided for during the evaluation process' (j) Summative evaluation should be written and include a formal interview; (k) Descriptive statements should be included especially when extreme high or low ratings are given; and (l) Summative evaluation information should be used to redefine criteria and goals for the next season or year as the process starts over.

3 Students Influenced

The first state high school athletic association started in 1903 in New York (Betts, 1974). These early athletic programs were supported by private citizens including J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller (Cozens & Stumpf, 1953). Not long after New York's association was created, Texas formed its own University Interscholastic League (UIL) in 1910 (UIL, 2007). In 1920, the increasing number of students

and schools involved in high school athletics caused the formation of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) (NFHS, 2007). Today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia belong to the NFHS.

3.1 Participation Figures

Nationwide, 77% of middle schools and 91.3% of high schools offered students opportunities to participate in at least one interscholastic sport (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2006). More than half of all middle schools offered interscholastic basketball, cheerleading or competitive spirits, cross country, fast pitch or slow pitch softball, football, track and field, and volleyball. More than half of all high schools offered interscholastic baseball, basketball, cheerleading or competitive spirits, cross country, fast pitch or slow pitch softball, football, golf, soccer, tennis, track and field, and volleyball.

Annually, the NFHS conducts a survey of high schools to gauge athletic participation across the United States. In 2006-2007, there were 7.3 million participants (NFHS, 2007) from the almost 16 million high school students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). National participation was up from 6.9 million athletes in the 2003-2004 school year, much higher than the 5.7 million participants just 10 years ago (NFHS). In 2005, Texas led the nation in participation with 763,967 participants (NFHS) out of 1.2 million high school students (Texas Education Agency, 2005). These numbers show that 63% of Texas' secondary students and 46% of secondary students nationwide participate in athletics.

3.2 Benefits of Participation

Historically, athletic and sports programs have been demonstrated to benefit students in a variety of manners including absences, dropouts, and discipline referrals (Greer, 1975; Hanks & Eckland, 1976). School and youth athletic programs have been documented to improve participants' motor, physical, and social development (Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Committee on School Health, 2001). Recently researchers also have demonstrated that participation is associated with higher grades (Camp, 1990; Cousins, 2004; Hecht, 1993; Silliker & Quirk, 1997), decreased likelihood of dropping out (Bell, 1967; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), greater enjoyment of school overall while in high school (Eccles & Barber, 1999), and an increased likelihood of attending and graduating from college (Galley, 2000; Gilman, 2001; Otto, 1982).

Documented in a longitudinal study by Guest and Schneider (2003) was the manner in which participation positively influences adult outcomes, such as occupational status, educational attainment, income, and psychosocial development. Participation in school activities serves as a major reason some students are motivated to attend school (Hall, Hord, Rutherford, & Huling, 1984; Kostel, 1993). With the implementation of Texas House Bill 72 (1984) and No Pass – No Play, Texas was among the first states to mandate strict academic eligibility requirements for extracurricular participation (National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE], 1999).

Citizenship, social success, leadership skills, and other positive peer relations are fostered through athletics and sports (Breithaupt, 1996; Elley & Kirk, 2002; Gerber, 1996; Klesse, 1994; Wright & Côté, 2003). After-school and at-risk programs are numerous and all have various levels of success. These programs may be costly, and they sometimes do not reach all the children they target. Expanding extracurricular programs may be the least expensive way to improve academic performance and instill values (Whitley, 1999).

Côté (2002) further suggested that sports provide students with social skills like cooperation, responsibility, self-control, empathy, and assertion. Cooperating with the team and coaches to reach a goal is a life skill that students may not receive any other place. Students who play football or volleyball must take individual responsibility for preparation over the summer so that when practices begin, they are prepared. The ability to lose with dignity and to respond to temporary defeats are skills that athletes acquire through participation in athletics (Cousins, 2004).

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a report in September 1995 that students who spent no time in extracurricular activities were (a) 49% more likely to have used drugs, (b) 37% more likely to become a teen parent, (c) 57% more likely to quit school before their senior year, and (d) 27% more likely

to have been arrested. Also documented in the study was that students not in extracurricular activities were 35% more likely to have smoked cigarettes than students who spent four hours or less per week in extracurricular activities. These trends were replicated by Cassel, Chow, DeMoulin, and Reiger (2000) in a later study.

Physical activities have been documented to have a positive influence on children and adolescent self-esteem (Howe, 1993). Gruber (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 studies in which the effects of physical activity on self-esteem were examined. The analysis revealed 43 separate effect sizes with a moderate overall effect size of 0.41. Participants in the studies displayed self-esteem scores nearly one-half a standard deviation higher than participants in control groups.

In a recent Texas study, Cousins (2004) correlated extracurricular participation and several academic factors. Statistically significant, but relatively weak, positive correlations between extracurricular participation and mean SAT score, $r(865) = .11$, mean ACT score, $r(1029) = .12$, percentage of 9th graders passing all sections of the TAKS exam, $r(1128) = .13$, percentage of 10th graders passing all sections of the TAKS exam, $r(1136) = .14$, and percentage of 11th graders passing all sections of the TAKS exam, $r(1136) = .09$, were noted. A moderately significant, positive relationship was noted between extracurricular participation and attendance rate, $r(1145) = .23$. Weak, statistically significant negative correlations indicating a decrease in the dropout rate, $r(1145) = -.13$, a decrease in discipline referrals, $r(1145) = -.09$, were also noted. In addition, Marsh and Kleitman (2003) reported that student participation in athletics has many positive effects and no apparent negative consequences.

Athletics not only affects the individual participants, but it also has influence on the participating communities and schools. Interscholastic athletics has been reported to be an effective opportunity to increase socialization and serve as a unifying factor of diverse individuals who lived within the same geographic area (Eitzen & Sage, 2003; Rader, 1999). Rader also commented that "high school sports helped to give an identity and common purpose to many neighborhoods, towns, and cities which were otherwise divided by class, race, ethnicity, or religion" (p. 111).

Critics of high school sports are present who claim that high school sports interfere with the educational mission of the system. Coakley (2001) proposed several of the traditional arguments opponents give against high school sports. Specifically, Coakley asserted that sports distracted attention from academic endeavors while perpetuating unnecessary power and performance in a postindustrial society. Other assumptions made by Coakley were: (a) sports turned most students into spectators of sports rather than participants in physical education, (b) sports resulted in serious injuries to student athletes, (c) sports created a superficial atmosphere that has nothing to do with educational goals, (d) sports influenced budget decisions and often deprived educational programs of human and financial resources, (e) sports created undue pressures on student athletes, (f) participation created a status system in which athletes were given excessive privilege, and (g) athletics created an atmosphere in which athletes asserted social dominance over non-athletes. These arguments have not been supported by a majority of educational leaders or community supporters.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

The athletic director position was created to improve control over the ever increasing demands of running an athletic program. As early as 1930, athletics was described as "one of the time-consuming and challenging problems confronting school administrators today" (Haggard, 1930, p. 390). Loveless (1953) indicated that intercollegiate athletic directors were in charge of (a) hiring and firing personnel, (b) scheduling competitions, (c) overseeing the budget, (d) program planning, (e) working with others giving direction and vision, (f) clerical activities, (g) alumni publications, and (h) fund raising.

Kelliher (1956) investigated the duties of the intercollegiate athletic director using job-analysis. The findings indicated that athletic directors were most concerned with (a) finances, (b) departmental organization, (c) personnel, (d) public relations, and (e) care of athletic property and facility maintenance. Forsythe (1963) reported that collegiate athletic directors' responsibilities included (a) filling out forms regarding certification of athletes, (b) attending to business details pertaining to the athletic program, (c) purchasing equipment, (d) arranging transportation, (e) scheduling competitions, (f) securing contest officials, and (g)

coordinating marketing objectives to the public.

Professional growth for athletic directors in 1968 consisted of self-study through annual conventions, professional journals, and group seminars (Schultz, 1968). During the late 1960s, the position of high school athletic director became common among medium and large high schools and the position "became associated with ever increasing professional status" (Keller & Forsythe, 1984, p. 6). The increased number of athletic directors led to the creation of the National Council of Secondary School Athletic Directors in 1969 and the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) in 1976 (Schneider & Stier, 2001).

Early researchers focused solely on the position of intercollegiate athletic directors and the roles and responsibilities necessary at that level (Forsythe, 1963; Kelliher, 1956; Loveless, 1953; Schultz, 1968). In 1980, five decades after Haggard's assessment of athletic directors, Parkhouse and Lapin (1980) were the first to break down the role of the interscholastic athletic directors into five administrative functions: (a) organization, (b) decision making and problem solving, (c) planning, (d) communication, and (e) evaluation. The demands and challenges have increased with time, and in recent decades school districts have expanded the job description for athletic directors within these categories. The huge variation in responsibilities and roles that must be assumed often creates polar extremes that athletic directors must balance. Miller (1982) described the athletic director as both an educator and a businessperson; a police officer, yet a promoter; a motivator, as well as a rule maker and enforcer; a public relations person, yet a tough corporate officer; a fund raiser and tight budget operator; and, someone with working knowledge of legal, medical, educational, and business skills.

Miller and Williams (1983) listed 14 areas of athletic directors responsibilities including: (a) budgeting, (b) eligibility concerns, (c) policy development, (d) representative to governing organizations, (e) public relations, (f) scheduling of events/facilities, (g) record keeping and reports, (h) equipment ordering, (i) fund raising/promotions, (j) travel arrangements, (k) attending athletic contests, (l) game/contest management, (m) financial aid concerns, and (n) personnel recruitment and management. All these areas are relevant today and may now include: (a) public relations, (b) administration of events, (c) planning and scheduling for the use of facilities, (d) purchasing and distribution of equipment and uniforms, (e) legal and medical protection of players and coaches, (f) development and execution of sound business practices, (g) the adherence and compliance with both conference and national rules, (h) implementation and management of media events, and (i) the constant pursuit of the aims, goals, and objectives of the institution (Smith, 1993). A large portion of these stated responsibilities are managerial, yet ironically most athletic directors view organizational ability and written communication as their weakest skills (Smith). With so many duties, the ability of a single individual to effectively manage all of the duties alone is highly unlikely (Hoch, 2002). Therefore, the athletic director must be a leader with the ability to delegate (Barnhill, 1998). He or she must then be able to supervise and manage delegated tasks.

Watkins and Rikard (1991) assessed how collegiate athletic directors' perceptions of their leadership behaviors compared to the perceptions of their coaches, deans, and presidents of their college. The *Managerial Behavior Survey* (MBS) was sent to eight National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III colleges. These schools were structured such that the dean and president were the immediate supervisors of the athletic director. The MBS was used to collect perceptions of the following behaviors: (a) emphasizing performance, (b) showing consideration, (c) career counseling, (d) inspiring subordinates, (e) providing praise and recognition, (f) structuring reward contingencies, (g) clarifying work roles, (h) goal setting, (i) training-coaching, (j) disseminating information, (k) encouraging decision participation, (l) delegating, (m) planning, (n) innovating, (o) problem solving, (p) facilitating the work, (q) monitoring operations, (r) representing the unit, (s) facilitating cooperation and teamwork, (t) managing conflict, (u) criticizing, and (v) administering discipline (Watkins & Rikard, 1991).

Watkins and Rikard (1991) examined whether interactions were present among the groups relating to the behaviors. The following roles showed no statistically significant interaction: (a) showing considerations, (b) inspiring subordinates, (c) providing praise and recognition, (d) clarifying work roles, (e) disseminating information, (f) encouraging decision participation, (g) delegating, (h) planning, (i) innovating, (j) problem solving, (k) monitoring the environment, (l) managing conflict, and (m) criticizing. Statistical findings also revealed that some behaviors were not viewed the same among all groups. Sports coaches viewed the behav-

ior of emphasizing performance, structuring reward contingences, and monitoring operations significantly different from the athletic directors, deans, and presidents (Watkins & Rikard).

In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS). Computer-assisted telephone interviews or self-administered mail questionnaires were completed by state agency personnel in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and among a nationally representative sample of districts ($n = 453$). Personal interviews were conducted with teachers ($n = 1194$) from representative elementary, middle, and high schools ($n = 988$).

The SHPPS (CDC, 2006) showed that 50% of states and 61.5% of school districts had adopted policies stating that head coaches of interscholastic sports must complete a coaches' training course. Also reported in the study was that head coaches need to be certified in first aid (47.7% of states and 61.3% of school districts), be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) (47.7% of states and 57.7% of school districts), be employed by the school or school district (39.1% of states, 56.8% of school districts), have a teaching certificate (32.7% of states and 46.0% of school districts), have previous coaching experience in the sport they will coach (15.2% of states and 28.7% of school districts), and have previous coaching experience in any sport (12.8% of states and 33.5% of school districts). An established role of the athletic director is the hiring and retention of a qualified staff of coaches.

5 Leadership Perceptions

Researchers have established how the suggested roles and responsibilities are viewed by the athletic director (Barnhill, 1998; Branch, 1990; Miller, 1982; Smith, 1993; Soucie, 1994) yet no research has been conducted to establish the level of importance that superintendents place on these roles. How all these responsibilities are accomplished within an arena that has become an increasingly visible part of the education system places a lot of pressure on the person responsible for the athletic department (Branch, 1990; Hoch, 2000; Ryska, 2002). Much of this stress comes because often the effectiveness of a coach or athletic director is more often simply based on win-loss records. Chelladurai and Reimer (1997) contended that athletics is the pursuit of excellence and excellence is attained by winning. This idea was supported by Broyles and Hay (1979) who said the purpose of athletics is to entertain, and the entertainment value is increased by winning. Athletic directors are aware of this pressure and view stress tolerance as their most important leadership task (Smith, 1993). Because the job of athletic directors is so comprehensive and occupies so much time, athletic directors must be committed and have a passion for their position (Malcom, 2005). Athletic directors told Smith that this ability to be driven by personal motivation was one of their strongest skills.

5.1 Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is "the total environmental quality within an organization" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 97). Hoy and Miskel (2007) established that leaders influence this climate and atmosphere through their attitudes and actions. The quality of this atmosphere within the athletic department is an important consideration for principals, athletic directors, and superintendents because both climate and leadership behavior are strongly associated with job satisfaction for educators (National Center For Education Statistics, 1997). Scott (1999) specifically focused on athletic directors' leadership behaviors and their effect on organizational climate. The study's sample included 13 athletic directors and 100 head coach respondents from 20 athletic departments.

Scott (1999) reported that athletic directors perceived themselves as having more interpersonal relationships with head coaches than the head coaches actually perceived. Scott concluded that these differing perceptions lead to strains on working relationships between coaches and athletic directors. These strains make the creation of a shared vision difficult which adversely impacts the climate of the organization.

In a similar study, Snyder (1990) also examined how athletic directors impacted job satisfaction for coaches in their department. Snyder's findings were consistent with Scott's (1999) study but also included a new result based on gender of the coaches involved. Female coach satisfaction was impacted by athletic director behaviors of structure and consideration; however, only consideration had a direct effect on male

coach satisfaction. Smucker and Whisenant (2005) also examined Texas public school coaches to investigate possible gender differences in job satisfaction. Statistically significant differences were present in co-worker satisfaction between the men and the women coaches. It is important that athletic directors use these relationships to clarify that all members of the athletic department on the same agenda (Shea, 2006). Chelladurai and Ogasawara (2003) stated, "...it would be a good strategy for athletic departments to try and retain their coaches by focusing on their satisfaction with the job" (p. 63).

5.2 Shared Vision

Bolman and Deal (2003) identified the need for a modern leader to be both an objective manager and an inspirational visionary. Although athletic directors are clearly organizational leaders, school districts are largely bureaucratic which often leads to feelings of isolation. Athletic directors must overcome this isolation. Athletic directors are responsible for establishing a shared vision within the department consistent with the goals of the school district through implementation of local, state, and national policies (Bucher & Krotee, 1998). One technique for communicating this shared vision is the distribution of a handbook. Among the 82.6% of middle and high schools that offered interscholastic sports, 86.7% distributed a handbook containing policies, regulations, rules, and enforcement measures for students who participated in interscholastic sports (CDC, 2006).

Soucie (1994) concluded that once coaches were hired, athletic directors are responsible for empowering these coaches to establish goals and motivating them to achieve them. Creating this shared vision is difficult if a leader's behaviors are not perceived as the leader intends. Watkins (1983) reported on how sport coaches and school leaders viewed the leadership behaviors of their athletic director. Watkins concluded that both sport coaches and school leaders perceived a majority of athletic director behaviors differently than how the athletic director perceived his or her own behavior. This finding was supported by a later study conducted by Spatkowski (1988).

Spatkowski (1988) replicated that how athletic directors described their leadership behaviors often did not match the perceptions others had of the same behaviors. Spatkowski's questionnaire was designed to evaluate 12 leadership behavior dimensions. On 8 of the 12 dimensions, the athletic directors perceived themselves as exhibiting a higher degree of the leadership behavior than did the head coaches they supervised. These differences were statistically significant for the variables of director's age, and size and classification of the institution but were not statistically significant for the amount of time spent on activities. This lack of statistical significance for time on task is an important finding because the perception others had of a behavior was consistent regardless of how much time athletic directors spent on that behavior (Spatkowski).

Sergiovanni (1992), a promoter of shared leadership, concluded that shared leadership will lead to greater professionalism by those persons being led. When shared leadership is present, there is not a great need for directives by administrators. "The more professionalism is emphasized, the less leadership is needed. The more leadership is emphasized, the less likely it is that professionalism will develop" (p. 42).

5.3 Situational Leadership

All students and communities served by school districts are distinctive, making each athletic director position a unique challenge. Rural schools not only serve as academic centers they also serve as social and cultural centers, providing entertainment through sports, theater, music, and other activities (Lyson, 2002). Leaders are considerably influenced by these situational requirements (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995) including the characteristics of those individuals they lead. Hersey and Blanchard (2007) described this phenomenon as situational leadership. Situational leadership asserts that leaders must analyze the maturity, strengths, and needs of the staff and tailor a response based on those factors.

Blanchard (1985) described the four styles of situational leadership as directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Directing is characterized by communication focusing on achieving the goal and little supporting action of the leader. Coaching is equally focused on achieving the goal and maintaining followers' needs while improving relationships. The supporting style elicits follower skills in a supportive way in order to

accomplish the task. The last style, delegating, offers less task input and social support and promotes follower confidence and motivation with regard to task (Blanchard).

Athletic directors understand that each position is unique and that the leadership of the AD is closely associated with the success or failure of the athletic programs (Schneider & Stier, 2001). Christian (2000), in a qualitative study, concluded that athletic directors believed no single leadership style would universally produce program success. The numerous strategies suggested in the study all had a common component of hiring good people and allowing them to do their jobs. Soucie (1994) also concluded that once coaches were hired, athletic directors were responsible for empowering these coaches to establish goals and motivating them to achieve them.

Historically, physical education programs have been the sole training program for many future administrators. Beginning in the 1970s, several researchers started to question the ability of these teacher programs to actually produce high performing interscholastic administrators (Cervak, 1982; Chason, 1984). This need was articulated in 1971 by Youngberg who said, "In general, athletic directors have been somewhat reluctant to write about or otherwise concern themselves with the professional preparation of administrators in their field" (p. 34).

Athletic directors hold leadership positions in today's public school systems. Additionally, the athletic director is the primary person who ultimately determines the success or failure of the athletic department (Miller & Williams, 1983). Superintendents must understand and monitor the roles and responsibilities of the athletic directors because of the large number of students impacted, the abundance of duties involved, and the athletic directors' ability to directly impact organizational climate.

6 Summary

The review of literature included a number of important references concerning athletics and athletic directors. Educational leadership traits including organization and planning, decision making and problem solving, communication, and evaluation were explored. The impact athletics has on students including participation figures and benefits of participation was examined along with the literature relevant to the historical roles and responsibilities of athletic directors. Finally, the review of literature included how perceptions of leadership for athletic directors impacted organizational climate, shared vision, and situational leadership abilities.

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