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Abstract

Youth sports experiences are used to develop instinctive and creative knowledge in crisis or complex situations. According to Socrates, true knowledge was conjured up by stimulating past experiences. Participation in youth sports might improve individuals' ability to evaluate contingencies, while identifying characteristics and behaviors that produce opportunities in demanding situations. Effective change required collaboration from involved participants, and required transparent communication to build team confidence throughout the implementation process.

Keywords

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Comments

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Introduction

Hospitality managers are expected to manage complex firms in unfamiliar internal and external contingencies (Rust, Moorman, & Bhalla, 2010). Hospitality managers can assume management roles in restaurant, lodging, and tourism industries, and all hospitality industries are facing high-turnover, workplace diversity, and innovative technology that impede the progression of quality customers service to guests (Chathoth, Mak, Jauhari, & Manaktola, 2007). Due to economic pressures, many managers from distinct industries (i.e., banking, school leadership, and manufacturing) are finding it challenging to effectively manage issues face in today's work environments (Stein, 2009). Change inspired successful leaders to seek solutions to potential problems within their organization, and successful leaders understood the importance of monitoring implemented change to minimize factors that can halt the progression of change (Church & Waclawski, 2001).

Youth sports experiences are used to develop instinctive and creative knowledge in crisis or complex situations (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker, & Hegreness, 2009). According to Socrates, true knowledge was conjured up by stimulating past experiences (Moser & Vander Nat, 2003). Participation in youth sports might improve individuals' ability to evaluate contingencies, while identifying characteristics and behaviors that produce opportunities in demanding situations. Effective change required collaboration from involved participants, and required transparent communication to build team confidence throughout the implementation process (Hinckley, 2009).

Youth sports players faced change, failure, and success on a continual and competitive basis, and youth sports can be used to set conditions that promote

commitment and continuous learning required to ensure future success in complex situations (Hinckley, 2009). Change required managers to step out of their comfort zones and accept change initiatives to improve change management in their organization. Sometimes organizations are staffed with managers who are resistant to change, and those managers might be expected to inspire others to accept organizational change. Youth sports are considered by many as one of the most important activities to identity leadership development during adolescence by improving cognitive, physical, and interpersonal skills that build character needed to handle and manage change (Arthur-Banning et al., 2009).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was used to explore the effect of youth sports on the development of leadership traits among various managers from different industries. The modified Van Kamm method proposed by Moustakas (1994) was used to explore the lived experiences of 20 managers (i.e., restaurant, banking, public school, and lodging) in North Carolina organizations who participated in youth sports for three to five years to identify patterns that might reveal interpersonal skills for change management. This study attempted to explore how youth sport experiences prepared individuals to manage change, and how the interpersonal skills were used in managerial experiences.

Literature Review

Effective management is used to fulfill set objectives and goals within organizations (Tubbs & Schulz, 2006). Sports leadership is used to encourage and inspire team members to collective goals rather than individual awards and recognition (Arthur-Banning et al., 2009). Competitive sports promoted a tough-mindedness and dominance

perspective towards accomplishing set objectives (Calhoun, 2007). In Rome, combat gladiatorial games gave gladiators the opportunity to strategize and implement survival tactics to survive the clutches of their opponents (McManus, 2007). Sports derived from Greece in the form of gladiatorial games, where athletes learned skills necessary for survival and applied those skills to future experiences (McManus).

Change is a constant in sports and today's fast pace hospitality environments, so hospitality managers must be equipped with leadership traits needed to successfully manage internal and external changes in their work environment (Manos, 2006). Youth sports were designed to improve the psychology of athletes when athletes were confronted in unfamiliar conditions (Manos, 2006). Youth sports could be used to connect athletes' self-perceptions to their characteristics traits and abilities to improve change management strategies in high-pressure circumstances (Calhoun, 2007).

Youth sports were used to build character development because actual experiences have a profound impact on a child's psychology (Chelladurai, 1980). Competent managers served as the link among successful implementation of leadership theories that were used to guide subordinates to a desired outcome; sports leadership gave athletes an opportunity to guide team objectives and manage change needed to accomplish set objectives (Larue, Child, & Larson, 2006; Sugar & Holloman, 2009). Athletes' knowledge of their respective sport gave sport leaders influential power over teammates to improve interpersonal skills and change management strategies (Calhoun, 2007; Gottschalk, Gudmundsen, & Yngve, 2010; Larue et al., 2006). Interpersonal skills can be developed in managers when managers understand and embrace the culture of their organization (Assegid, 2009).

Today's hospitality managers are expected to gel and blend into complex and high-pressure work environments without fear of change (Margolis & Stoltz, 2010). Hospitality managers who lack fear can engage in work related issues with some ease and not panicking when foreign problems arise. Individuals acquired proactive knowledge from past experiences, observations, and actions to ease their fear towards change (Nonaka & Nishiguichi, 2001).

Methodology

A qualitative, phenomenological study was used to explore youth sports impact on the development of interpersonal leadership skills that prepared managers from various industries to adapt to change. North Carolina managers (eastern region) were used as the target population in this qualitative research study and demographics can be found in Table 1. The sample selected for this research study consisted of 20 managers living in North Carolina who participated in youth sports (3-5 years) and who managed an organization (3-5 years). Of the 20 managers selected, 45% represented the hospitality industry from tourism, restaurant, foodservice, and club entities. A sample population sought both male and female, and individuals who participate in team (playing with other players to achieve a goal) or individual (performing individually to achieve a goal) sports. The first participant was a personal contact, and the first participant was asked to suggest any potential participants (e.g., managers who work for at least 3-5 years in an organization) for the research study to use a snowballing technique to acquire respondents. The same systematic process occurred with each participant in the research study to ensure reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The selection of managers who

participated in youth sports was used to yield insight into interpersonal skills used during athletic competition.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were designed for two separate interview sessions. Before each interview, respondents were presented with a consent form to explain the purpose of the qualitative phenomenological research study. The consent form contained information about the reason for the study, purpose of questions being asked, and purpose of recording data for the research study. The consent form was designed to inform participants of the purpose of the research study and tape-recorded interviews. Each participant was assigned a code to protect their identity, such as Manger NC01, and this information was explained in the consent form. All interview data were kept confidential in a combination locked safe for three years, and computer information was password protected to prevent unauthorized access to electronic and paper data. Only the researcher obtained the combination code to maintain participant confidentiality.

The main objective was to elicit details of the participants' managerial experiences on the context from which opinions were drawn from past youth sports experiences to handle problematic situations. QSR Nvivo 8.0 software was used to analyze and transcribe common themes among the managers who participated in this study (Walsh, 2003).

Data Collection

The interviews were scheduled at the researcher's office location, and tape-recorded and transcribed to Nvivo 8.0 software. The first interview consisted of 20 generic questions pertaining to their youth sports and managerial experiences. The responses from the first interviews were recorded and analyzed with the assistance of

Nvivo 8.0 to discover common themes. A second interview consisting of five specific-based questions was designed from the common themes derived from the first interview. The second interview responses were transcribed to develop the final common themes among respondents using Nvivo 8.0 software. No new themes emerged from the second interview, so there was no need to interview the participants a third time.

Results

Sample population was 80% male and 20% female, and 90% of the participants played team-oriented sports (i.e., basketball, baseball, football, and soccer). Baseball and football prevailed as the two dominant team sports in the study. A fearlessness approach (i.e., ability to comfortably integrate leadership into different situations) to change emerged as a common theme from respondents' responses in the second interview meeting. This fearlessness approach to change was labeled a proponent for change for this research study.

Proponent for Change

The majority of the participants was extremely confident and comfortable with unfamiliar situations and embraced unknown territories in youth sports and work environments. Most participants felt that they were relaxed within the decision-making process and maneuvered with a fearless attitude in change situations. Effective lodging managers are proponents to integrating new technologies (i.e., reservation systems and web-based booking features) to improve quality customer service and revenues for their firm (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). Most participants thought their interpersonal skills were developed from the participation in youth sports; this development helped to eliminate or minimize their fear of managing in change situations.

The fear of change can impede the progression of individuals within an organization to make an organization become stagnate to new ideas and solutions to contingencies (Childs, 2005). NC03 said, "I learned to be strong-willed and not allow people to push me around with words or bully me into submission." Most participants believed youth sports taught them not to fear opponents and not to fear the limit of their abilities to help with the management of change within teams and external environments. NC04 added, "I learned to be very flexible from sports, and I learned to be accepting of change, believing it must be for the better."

Most participants were comfortable changing and shifting positions within youth sports teams and learned not to fear change within the team or complex work environments. Poor change management bred leaders who were resistant to change and failed to set conditions that inspired an acceptance of change among followers due to their poor leadership skills (Hackett, 2006). The participants believed change was a normal process and embraced the opportunity to implement change within their team or organization. Participants viewed change as a positive issue in most situations, and participants expressed a willingness to embrace different or multiple roles to achieve team goals.

The participants exhibited calm tones when communicating about the acceptance of change in youth sport and management situations. The managers who participated in the current study agreed with Calhoun (2007), who stated that participation in sports builds confidence and character in high-pressure situations. Further agreement was found with Chelladurai (1980), who concluded that young athletes learn how to persuade and influence others to aspire towards the accomplishment of team goals. The participants in

the current study also agreed with the concepts of situational leadership and contingency theory as both refer to the perception of adapting and adjusting to change (Hunter, 2006).

Many participants mentioned the importance of adjusting to the situation to achieve set goals or objectives. Chelladurai (1980) believed sports taught individuals how to communicate with confidence and assurance in complex situations. Most participants showed no fear about leading others through change, and participants embraced the opportunity to communicate and implement change among subordinates.

Discussion and Conclusion

Hunter (2006) believed that confident communication added diversity to leaders when interacting with individuals exhibiting different personalities and learning styles. Themes indicated that managers were comfortable combining leadership traits to unfamiliar situations by blending into the environment and acknowledging change as a necessity. Resistance to change among leaders can make decision-making tactics and strategic plans ineffective in a complex work environments (i.e., lodging and restaurants) (Graham, 2006). When leaders reject or fear change, it can hinder the use of effective and efficient interpersonal skills needed to manage change in complex work environments (Hinckley, 2009).

The current findings helped determine the factors that influence the participation in youth sports effect on developing confident interpersonal skills to effectively manage change with minimal or no fear. The results can be applied in practice, and practical implications are discussed in this section. Previous studies found sports to have a positive effect on effective leadership that can be used to motivate individuals. Chelladurai and Carron (1983) believed athletes learned effective skills to manage others during change

situations. The current findings in this study were used to suggest that managers developed attitudes and behaviors that made them proponents to change.

The current findings were used to suggest that managers who participated in youth sports learned to manage complicated conditions faced during athletic competition as a youth. The current study found that managers with an athletic background had no fear of change, and the findings may suggest that individuals who possess a sports background easily integrate into complex or diverse work environments (i.e., hospitality industry). The significance of the findings emphasized the acceptance of change learned from youth sport experiences among North Carolina managers that generated confidence and comfortable perspectives when managing change. The current findings discovered interpersonal skills learned and used from youth sports provided skills essential to minimize fear during change.

The comfort and calm composure in change situations gave participants the ability to confidently use learned interpersonal skill themes because participants were comfortable managing in change situations. The current study enhanced the development of minimal or no fear, acceptance, and confidence needed to effectively manage change in complex organizations (Campbell, 2009). The emerged theme generated a calm and confident awareness or approach among participants to handling change in youth sports competition or work environments. Future studies can be used to explore the potential effect that a proponent to change attitude has on effective change management strategies and philosophies in hospitality organizations. Hospitality students and hospitality industry managers should be examined to determine if youth sports play a significant role in their development of effective leadership styles and traits.

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Table 1

Basic Youth Sports and Managerial Demographic Profile

Participant's Codes	Region	Youth Sports Experience	Management Experience	Sport	Sex	Industry
NC01	Goldsboro, NC	3	20	Basketball	Male	Foodservice
NC02	Elm City, NC	6	7	Baseball	Male	Public Schools
NC03	Wilson, NC	3	5	Baseball	Male	Foodservice
NC04	Snow Hill, NC	5	9	Football	Male	Banking
NC05	Smithfield, NC	8	3	Football	Male	Restaurant
NC06	Rocky Mount, NC	5	6	Baseball	Male	Retail
NC07	Elm City, NC	3	5	Tennis	Male	Tourism
NC08	Wilson, NC	6	15	Soccer	Male	Club
NC09	Goldsboro, NC	10	20	Basketball	Female	Banking
NC10	Wilson, NC	8	5	Softball	Female	Public Schools
NC11	Wilson, NC	8	6	Baseball	Male	Tourism
NC12	Fayetteville, NC	4	7	Football	Male	Retail
NC13	Clayton, NC	3	7	Football	Male	Manufacturing

NC14	Raleigh, NC	8	5	Football	Male	Restaurant
NC15	Elm City, NC	5	3	Tennis	Female	Banking
NC16	Saratoga, NC	8	9	Baseball	Male	Legal
NC17	Wilson, NC	10	15	Baseball	Male	Fireman
NC18	Elm City, NC	10	3	Football	Male	Lodging
NC19	Wilson, NC	7	4	Football	Male	Public Schools
NC20	Wilson, NC	8	10	Volleyball	Female	Tourism