Peculiarities of Social Interaction of Sports Managers as Strategic Leaders at Their Work: Lithuanian Case

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Abstract

The research question is whether social interaction of sports managers as strategic leaders (how the leader thinks, what the leader does, and what impact the leader has) presented in the paper is manifest in the choice of conflict management strategy and the ego states and is influenced by the person's age and professional experience.

Theoretical background for defining strategic leadership is Boal's (2004) idea that strategic leadership forges a bridge between the past, the present, and the future by reaffirming core values and identity to ensure continuity and integrity as the organization struggles with known and unknown realities and possibilities. In this way, positive strategic leaders are themselves strategic about bringing their whole person – past experiences, values, purpose, and personal vision – to their role as a leader who contributes to the collective good. Scientists analysing problems of management of sports organisations (Burke & Collins, 2000) have noted the lack of empirical research in conflict investigation. According to Brathwaite (2004), creative conflict management increases efficiency of an organisation. According to Quinn (2000), paraphrasing the most famous positive strategic leader, Mahatma Gandhi, positive strategic leaders must take the initiative to "be the change they wish to see" by becoming more humane and authentic leaders. Quinn (2004) has suggested that the foundation of leadership is not behaviour, competencies, techniques, or position, rather, the foundation of leadership comes out of being who we are, or the "person within" the leader. Therefore, it can be said that social interaction of a strategic leader affects that which constitutes the leader as a person. Thus, we should rely on theories that disclose the peculiarities of conflict management strategy (De Dreu, Weingart, 2003) and ego states (Berne, 1972) of transactional theory that postulates analysis as essentially a cognitive-behavioural theory of personality and change that nevertheless retains an interest in the psychodynamic aspect of the personality.

The methodology used was a survey performed during the meeting of Sports Division managers of Lithuanian municipal governments organised by the Department of Physical Education and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The group of the survey included 45 (43 men and 2 women) out of 60 managers of Sports Divisions of Lithuanian municipal governments or 75 percent of the sample size. The average age of the members of the group was 48 years and the average work experience was 13 years. Data processing package SPSS 13.0 for Windows was used. Chi-square (?2) criterion was used to verify the statistical significance of differences in the data obtained. The chosen level of significance was ?=0.05.

The results of the research have shown that the selection of collaboration and compromise strategies is significant with respect to the age of the managers: younger managers (under 48 years of age) tend to opt for a collaboration strategy, whereas elder managers choose compromise. More than half of the sports managers can be characterised by a Critical Parent ego state. Manifestation of a Nurturing Parent and Adult ego states is significantly different with respect to the professional experience: the less experienced the manager is the stronger manifestation of the Adult state and the more experienced the manager is the stronger manifestation of the Nurturing Parent state.

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