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Establishing the Effectiveness of Sports Administrators in Secondary Schools in Hwange District in Zimbabwe

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MRPG designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Authors TT and ACN carried out all laboratories work and performed the statistical analysis. Author MRPG managed the analyses of the study. Author TT wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author ACN managed the literature searches and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the effectiveness of sports administrators in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The main focus of the study was on sport administration expertise in the running of sport in secondary schools in Hwange District. The study employed the quantitative paradigm and adopted the descriptive survey design. The population comprised secondary schools in Hwange

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District. The sample consisted of all the 120 sports administrators. Of the sample respondents, 80% were male and 20% female. Data were collected using a questionnaire which had both closed-ended questions and open-ended ones. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret data. The study revealed that most sports administrators were hand-picked by heads of schools and there were no workshops organised to enhance their performance. The study also revealed that most if not all of the sport administrators were assigned other tasks that took most of their time away from sport administration. The study recommends that in order for effective sport administration to take place in the secondary schools, sport administrators should not be assigned any other duties that take most of their time and energy away from sport activities. The study also recommends that there should be staff development workshops and sessions by experts for teachers-in-charge of sports in secondary schools.

Keywords: Sports administrator/manager; district; secondary school; effectiveness; establish.

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of sports in the life of a young student is invaluable and goes much further than the basic answer that "it keeps kids off the streets" [1]. Indeed, it does keep kids off the streets, but it also instills lessons that are essential in the life of a student. As [2] observes, sports play a pivotal role in the make-up of a young athlete especially in the middle school to high school years where student athletes were much more mature and mentally developed. Sports help the young and impressionable youth learn values like discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, sacrifice and accountability [2]. Television, which may be the most influential tool in the lives of young adults, does not show enough of these qualities nor is it on the internet or radio [3]. Sports may also help provide good livelihoods for successful sports persons and the need for proper co-ordination of sporting activities in schools cannot be over emphasised [3]. Sports persons produced through proper administration of sporting activities in the schools may also help their countries perform well in international arenas, like Olympics, All-Africa Games, World Cups, among others. As [4] state, the bulk of the athletes that represent many advanced countries like the United States of America, Russia and Germany were drawn from high schools and universities. It is on account of this information that this study sought to establish the effectiveness of those teachers assigned the task of running sports in the secondary schools and are referred to as sports administrators since they are expected to co-ordinate sporting activities in their schools for the benefit of the individual students and their schools.

1.1 Literature Review

According to [5] state that in the United States, there are three basic requirements that a

competent sports administrator should be able to know in general sport management, and these are organisational management, information management and exercise and sport science. As the [6] states, under information management, a competent sports administrator should be able to communicate, keep game notes and statistics, interview, promote, advertise and fund-raise for sporting activities. Communication plays a vital role in the development of any organisation, sport included [7]. Effective communication is a prime contributor to success in any organisation. In a school situation, the sports director has to communicate with the school administration, sports associations, parents, teachers, athletes and business sponsors [8].

According to [9] in Zimbabwe, communication with different groups and individuals provide a wide base of support for individual sport programmes of the school and communication by the sport administrator also includes announcements on coming events and news releases. In the context of Netherlands, the administrator should be able to use different methods of communication like written, visual and face to face [8]. From the Nigerian experience, written communication may involve publication of weekly bulletins on sporting events in the school, zone, district, nationally or internationally [10]. Visual communication could include posters, power points, use of overhead projectors, videos and CDs or DVDs, while face to face communication will involve meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars [7]. A competent sport administrator should be able to use various means of communication.

Horine [1] states that fund-raising is one of the activities that a competent sport administrator should be able to do, especially taking into account the schools' tight budgets and that the sport programmes may get very little from the

overall school budget. The sport administrator should be able to plan for fund-raising activities after getting permission from the school administration [1]. The sport administrator should maintain an on-going communication system with donors by use of weekly newsletters and should involve as many people as possible in the process of fund-raising [7]. The administrator may create a committee comprised of teachers and members of society from which donations are expected [11]. The sport administrator should develop a strategic plan which should come up with invitations to special events like the school house competitions and the sale of the school's sports bulletin [11]. The public may also use the school's sports facilities after school hours and over weekends for a fee to raise funds.

Organisational management involves a number of activities and as [5] instate, some of the activities include budgeting, co-ordinating, management of personnel, management of facilities, planning, controlling and evaluation. Fund budgeting serves an important internal accounting function but is most useful in presenting financial reports to higher authorities such as school boards or athletic councils [11]. The sports administrator works with various people and thus the importance of good human relations. The administrator should be able to give various individuals and groups the opportunity to develop in their areas of interest.

Facility management is the process of planning, administering, co-ordinating and evaluating the day-to-day operation of a sporting facility [9]. It is, therefore, prudent that the sport administrator should be well informed in the management of facilities so as to maintain school sporting facilities at their best. A competent sport administrator should possess the knowledge of even management in sports [12]. Successful event management comes through effective planning and in the planning process, the sport administrator should consider the venue to be used for the event; he/she should also consider problems likely to inhibit the success of the event and also consider such things as transport, feeding arrangements for athletes, officials, accommodation, press and publicity, officials to be invited, age groups taking part and timelines for tasks to be carried out should be set [11].

According to the [6], sport science includes areas such as adaptive teachers, biomechanics, sport psychology, physiology, nutrition and sport medicine and muscle metabolism and the

knowledge of these areas will enhance the effectiveness of a sport administrator. The concept of sport for all also includes the handicapped pupils who should also participate in sport and the sport administrator should guide teachers to work with pupils with various disabilities such as amputations, blindness and mental retardation among many other disabilities [9].

Biomechanics will provide information to the sport administrator on how to measure pupils' performance in sport activities and helps him/her to design training programmes and physiology determines the athletes' muscle strength, body composition, flexibility and measuring anaerobic power [11]. Knowledge in sport science will assist the sport administrator in identifying people with relevant expertise who will be able to train pupils in sport [12].

Another area that a sport administrator should have competency in is the knowledge in computer technology [6]. The use of computer technology in the contemporary world has become the in-thing and new developments in sport are surfacing daily and a sport administrator without the knowledge of computer technology may find it difficult to survive in the world of sport [6].

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Sports in schools form the main foundation for national and international sports people in any country. Sports also play a critical role in inculcating among the youths, values such as discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, sacrifice and accountability. The sports administrators' role is rather sparsely empirically investigated [11]. Also, the qualities and competencies of effective sports administrators need documentation [9]. Furthermore, sport is commended for enhancing the well-being and health of people in a given society [11]. This, therefore, underlines the importance of effective co-ordination of sporting activities by school administrators.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study sought to expose the status of sport administrators in secondary schools in terms of their effectiveness to run sporting activities for the benefit of the pupils. It was also hoped that the study would guide school heads and

education officers with the best criterion to select sport administrators.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Do sports administrators possess the required expertise to administer sports in the schools?
2. Are there adequate sports facilities and other resources for sports in the schools?
3. Do schools hold workshops for sports administrators?
4. What are other responsibilities that sports administrators perform in the schools?

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The study was confined to the establishment of effectiveness of sports administrators in secondary schools in Hwange District in Matabeleland North in Western Zimbabwe. The respondents were 120 sports administrators from 120 secondary schools who are at the core of sporting activities in the schools. Views from other key stakeholders like heads of schools, teachers, pupils and parents were outside the purview of this study.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative methodology and made use of a survey research design. According to [13] the descriptive survey design looks with intense accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees. The respondents were whole-sampled from a population of 120 secondary schools to come up with 120 sports administrators. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting data. The researchers designed their own questionnaire. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers used triangulation within the instrument. The questionnaire had two sections namely, the bio-data of respondents and that of research data. It had three questions asking for respondents' bio-data in the areas of gender, qualification and teaching experience. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of five closed-ended and two open-ended questions revolving around sports' administrators' perceptions of roles of heads and challenges faced by sports administrators in sports administrators. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researchers in the schools. The data

collection lasted the first two weeks of April 2014. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to the schools under study. The same method was used to collect the completed questionnaires in order to maximise on the rate of return. Non-returns, as [14] observe, introduce a bias in as much as they are likely to differ in many ways from respondents thereby, adversely affecting reliability and validity of the findings. To observe ethical considerations, the researchers undertook two responsibilities. First, they applied for permission to carry out research in the Hwange District from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Provincial Education Director and the District Education Officer. Second, the questionnaires called for the anonymity of the respondents since respondents' names were not needed. Data gathered through the questionnaire produced descriptive statistics around the variables under study.

2.1 Findings and Discussion

The study set out to establish the effectiveness of sports administrators in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. This section is presented in two parts namely, presentation and discussion of the data.

2.2 Presentation of Data

The information in Table 1 shows that there were more males than females, 80% and 20% respectively.

Table 1. Composition of respondents by gender (N = 120)

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	96	80
Female	24	20
Total	120	100

As Table 2 shows, the majority of sports administrators were not in possession of sports qualifications (80%). Only (20%) of the respondents were holders of relevant sports qualifications.

Table 3 shows that 60% of the respondents fell within the 6 – 10 years of experience, 30% were within the 0 – 5 years, 10% within the 11 – 15 years. None were within the 16 – 20 years and above 20 years.

Table 2. Professional qualifications of respondents (N = 120)

Professional qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate /Diploma in education	60	50
BED/Graduate certificate in education	36	30
Sports qualification	24	20
Total	120	100

Table 3. Composition of respondents by experience with the ministry of primary and secondary education (N = 120)

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 5 years	36	30
6 – 10 years	72	60
11 – 15 years	12	10
16 – 20 years	0	0
Above 20 years	0	0
Total	120	100

The information in Table 4 shows that 80% of the respondents were referred to as sports masters or mistresses by their schools, only 20% were called sport directors.

Table 5 shows that 80% of the respondents indicated that they were appointed by heads to their post of sport administrator. Only 10% stated that they were chosen by teachers and another 10% volunteered to become sport administrators. None were appointed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Fig. 1 shows that 100% of the respondents listed directing, budgeting and attending meetings as the key responsibilities of sport administrator. Seventy percent (70%) stated that taking inventory and appointing coaches were the key duties of a sport administrator and 80% thought that inspecting and appointing coaches were core duties of sport administrator.

Table 4. Composition of respondents by title given at school (N = 120)

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Sports master/mistress	96	80
Sports manager	0	0
Sport co-ordinator	0	0
Sport director	24	20
Sport administrator	0	0
Total	120	100

Table 5. Responses to the statement: “State how a sport administrator is appointed at your school (N = 120)

Appointment	Frequency	Percentage
Volunteers	12	10
Selected by other teachers	12	10
Applied for the post	0	0
Appointed by the ministry of primary and secondary education	0	0
Appointed by the school head	96	80
Total	120	100

Fig. 2 shows that all the respondents (100%) indicated that their schools offered soccer, volleyball, netball and athletics. 70% offered basketball, 30% tennis and none of the schools offered rugby and cricket.

Table 6 shows that 60% of the respondents taught other subjects other than those related to sport administration, 30% taught physical education and 10% were members of the school development committee. None was a head of department.

Information of Fig. 3 shows that all the respondents (100%) indicated that sport administrators should be exempted from all other duties in order to concentrate on sport business, schools should introduce new sport disciplines as well as the allocation of more funds for sporting activities. 80% indicated that they needed training and also that schools should hire experts to help schools on sporting activities.

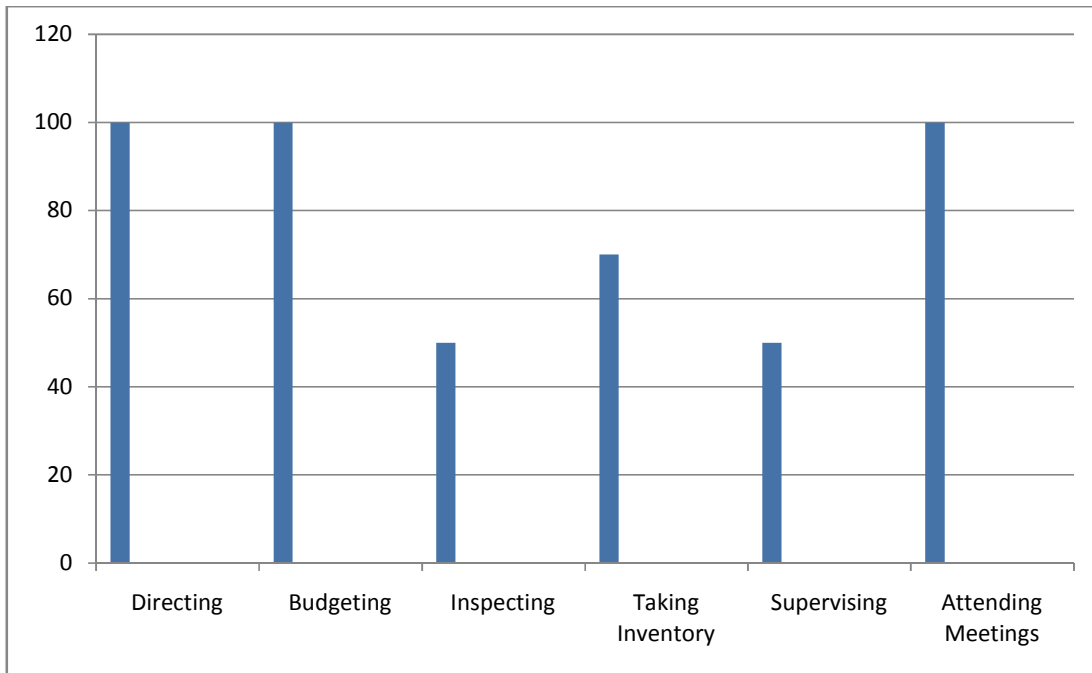


Fig. 1. Responses to the question: "What do you think should be key responsibilities of a sport administrator?" (N = 120)

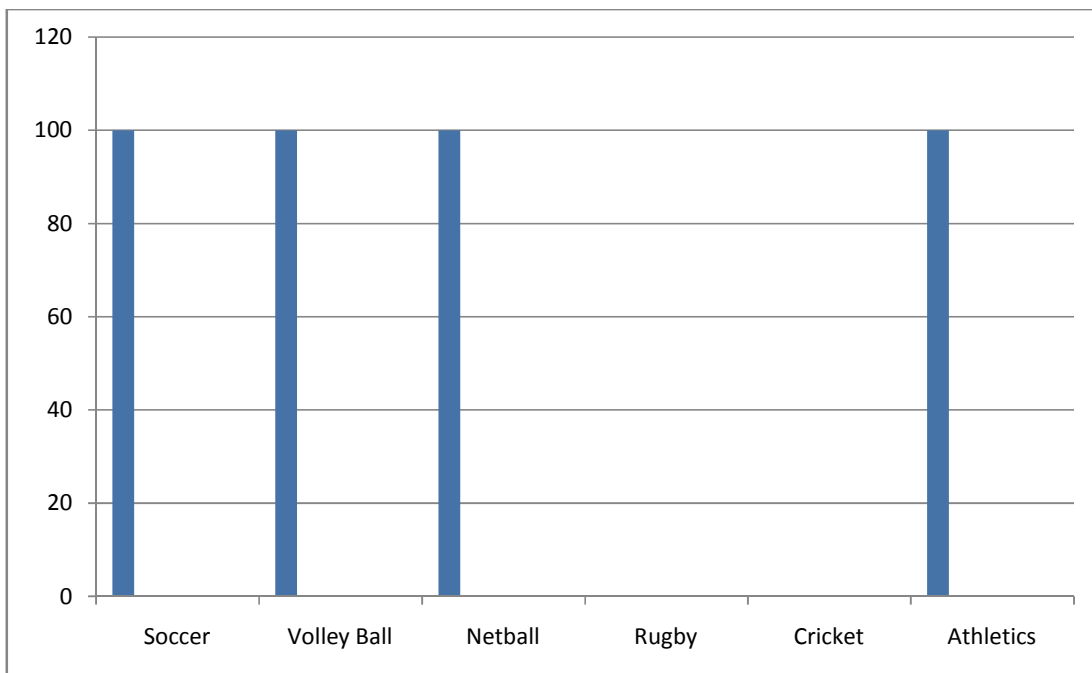


Fig. 2. Responses to the question: "Which sport disciplines are available at your school?" (N = 120)

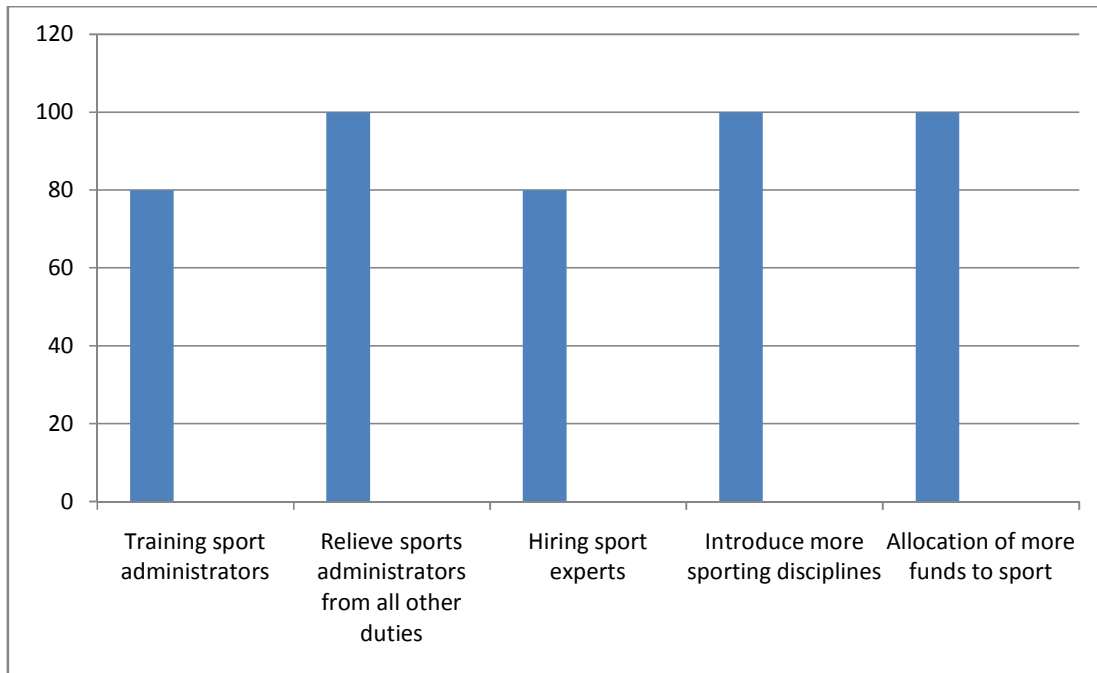


Fig. 3. Responses to the statement: "Suggest ways that can be used to improve sport administration in your school" (N = 120)

Table 6. Responsibilities of respondents in their schools (N = 120)

Responsibilities	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching physical education	36	30
Teaching other subjects	72	60
Head of department	0	0
School development committee member	12	10
Total	120	100

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions which bolstered information gathered through the close-ended questions. The first question sought to find out from the respondents what they thought should be the role of school heads in the administration of sport. The majority of respondents indicated that school heads should work through sport administrators to provide sport funds, organise sport activities and motivate teachers and pupils to participate in sporting activities instead of them usurping the powers of the sport administrators. The second question wanted to find out from respondents

what they thought were the major challenges that they experience as they carried out their duties as sport administrators. The most common challenges included lack of adequate resources to efficiently run sport activities, lack of support from heads and teachers, poor sporting facilities as well as lack of time and the prioritization of academic subjects over sport.

3. DISCUSSION

Information from the study reveal that the majority of sport administrators in the schools did not possess relevant sport qualifications. Only a few were in possession of the proper qualifications. Sport as [9] argues, is a very technical area which requires a highly trained teacher to guide both teachers and students. According to [5], there are three basic requirements that a competent sport administrator should be able to know; and these are, organisational management, information management, information management and exercise and sport science. All these skills require a well trained sport administrator.

Findings from the study reveal that the majority of schools referred to their sport administrators as sports master or mistress. It also was

revealed that in the majority of cases, these were appointed by heads. [3] posits that in a normal set-up, a qualified sport administrator gets their position through applying for it formally rather than being hand-picked by the school. A sport administrator hand-picked by the head is likely to do what the head instructs them to do even if it means neglecting sporting activities.

The study also reveals that most sport administrators wanted to direct all sporting activities in their schools, wanted to do most if not all the budgeting for sport programmes in the school as well as attending all meetings on sport administration convened outside the school. This concurs with sentiments by [11] who stated that sport administrators should be allowed to do the budgeting for sporting activities in the school instead of this to be done by school authorities.

Findings reveal that all the schools offered soccer for both boys and girls, volleyball, netball and athletics. A few offered tennis and basketball. None of the schools offered rugby and cricket. It is important that schools offer as many sporting disciplines as possible in order to accommodate all pupils. As [9] postulates, the concept of sport for all includes all pupils including the handicapped pupils who should also participate in sport and the sport administrator should guide teacher to work with pupils with various disabilities such as amputations, blindness and mental retardation among many other disabilities. This can only happen where as many sporting disciplines are available to cater for various needs of pupils.

The information from the study also indicates that most sport administrators want to be relieved of all other responsibilities which are not sport related, they want more resources allocated to sport and also want their schools to introduce more sports disciplines. Some of the sport administrators wanted their schools to hire sport experts to complement their work and more training for sport administrators. The improvements of these aspects would help schools produce successful sportspersons who may lead good livelihoods through sport. As [8] suggests, sports persons produced through proper administration of sporting activities in the schools may help their countries perform well in international arenas, like Olympics, All-Africa Games, World Cups, among other tournaments.

The data from the study also reveal that most heads interfere with the roles of sport administrators and in some instances, by usurping the powers of sport administrators. As [7] posits, the role of heads in sport administration should be confined to facilitation and co-ordination through the sport administrators. Heads ought to see to it that sport administrators are provided with adequate wherewithals to carry out their duties and to support whatever constructive programmes have been crafted by sport administrators instead of disrupting the plans of sport administrators.

3.1 Limitations of the Study

In view of the small size of the sample and sub-samples used, the findings of the study would have limited generalisability. The descriptive survey design used has its limitations as well. [15] says it lacks predictive power since the research may discover and describe 'what is' and unable to predict 'what would be.' The respondents may also give false responses thereby affecting the validity of the findings. This was mitigated by triangulation of methods.

4. CONCLUSION

Given the background of the above findings, the researchers make the following conclusions:

- Both theoretical and empirical data in this study converge on the fact that sport administrators in Hwange District do not effectively perform their duties of administering sport in the schools.
- Most school administrators did not possess relevant sport qualifications.
- Most schools called those teachers in charge of sports, sports masters/mistresses.
- Sport administrators wanted to direct all sporting activities in their schools, wanted to do most of the budgeting for sport programmes as well as attend all meetings on sport issues.
- Most schools offered the traditional sporting activities like soccer, volleyball, netball and athletics. There are very few other disciplines.

- Sport administrators were overloaded with other chores that were not related to their core-business.
- Most heads interfere with roles of sport administrators and in some cases, even usurp the powers of sport administrators.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make some recommendations.

- School administrators should be advised to upgrade their qualifications so that they can be relevant in their posts.
- Schools should refer to their sport administrators as sport administrators as this description covers more than games.
- Sport administrators should be allowed to direct all sporting activities in their schools including the budgeting for sport programmes.
- Schools should expand the menu of sporting disciplines instead of confining themselves to the traditional ones so that they cater for the sporting needs of all pupils.
- For effective administration of sport in the secondary schools, the sport administrator should not be overloaded with many assignments outside the realm of sport.
- Heads of schools should not interfere with the work of sport administrators. They should allow the sport administrators to perform their duties without undue interference and should only provide support and guidance.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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