



P-ISSN: 2394-1685
E-ISSN: 2394-1693
IJPESH 2014; 1(4): 20-24
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www.kheljournal.com
Received: 29-12-2014
Accepted: 21-01-2015

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Sport development; The Nigerian way: A review

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Abstract

Sports Performance and achievements has been the avenue through which great nations of the world exhibit their supremacy over others through sports development strategy. Effective sports development therefore requires variables like sport policy, sports personnel, sports funding, sports program, sports facilities and sponsorship. The extent to what these variables are met shall no doubt affects the effectiveness of any sports development. Two distinguishing features of the Nigeria sports system are its central organization and its employment for specific socio-political objective it is against this backdrop that this paper will X ray the politicization of sports which parallels sports development in the enhanced role of sports and in contrast with developed nations sports system and management.

Keywords: Sport development, Sports Performance and Advancements of sport.

1. Introduction

Sports development refers to the gradual increase, attainment and advancement of sport from low level strata to a higher level or strata with due cognizance and consideration of the indices that enhance the realization and actualization of sports development (Yazid 2006). These indices include: sports policy, sports personnel, sports programme (training and competition), funding, facilities and sponsorship. Sports is a vital and dependable weapon for all kinds of battles; it is today's greater marketing instrument for political mass mobilization and for direct governance and anchorage for national and international unity ^[10].

Sports has become an important aspect of Nigerian culture so much so that the interest in and popularity of sports have affected the political, social, economic and educational fabrics of the nation; the review become imperative as the nation is gearing towards rebranding and reviewing its sports development policy. The review will go a long way in assisting and bringing to light some silent issues that have been overlooked over the years.

Amuchie, (1999) ^[2] stated that sports is a mirror of the society; games provide a touch stone for understanding how people live, work, think and play as well as serving as a barometer of a nation's progress and civilization. It is understood that sports is one of the social services that nations of the world provide for their citizens and for such service (sport) to flourish, there must be a laid down philosophy and policy. The question is, are these responsibilities adhered to by the three tiers of government as laid down in the policy (1989 & 2002). In this modern civilized world, the success and failure of any sports team is often attributed to the philosophy, policy statement, competencies and inadequacies of the coaches. This is because coaches and sports managers are responsible for designing quality programmes for the players/athletes, assessing and understanding strategies for training, camping and selection of athletes for major national and international friendlies and competitions. With standard facilities players/athletes could improve upon their standard of play and coaches could design a better training programme. Adequate funding in any field of endeavor is of paramount importance. This is because the procurement of facilities and equipment, recruitment of qualified personnel, payment of better remuneration and incentives for coaches and players/athletes, engaging teams in international training tours can only be possible with adequate funding (Yusuf, 1992). Sports programmes have grown beyond what government alone can fund effectively and the huge sums of money needed to carry out local and international sports activities makes it imperative for government to look for sources (sponsorship) of funding outside, government agencies. This paper conceptualizes sports development as embodied in the second chapter of

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the Sports Development Policy for Nigeria (1989). The document under reference categorized sports development under the following five components:

- (i) International sports
- (ii) Indigenous sports
- (iii) Stadium Management\
- (iv) Institutional sport and Sports Associations

2. Concept and indices of sports development

Sports development can be regarded as a process of continuous improvement of the sports structures performances and programmes in order to create a condition which is conducive to physical fitness for all and the effective functioning of self-actualization (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989). It is a common knowledge today that the attainment of world class status in sports is a strong reflection of development objective of a country. Amuchie, (1992) Defined development as stage in growth that leads to advancement, increase in size, to evolve and to unfold. It denotes a state of coming into being and evolving into maturity. According to Amuchie, (1992) Sport growth and development can be measured in two ways: - Vertically and horizontally: Vertically by identifying increase in the number of new sports a country have participated in over the years: horizontally by determining the levels of frequency of competition in sports within a given period, furthermore sports could also be measured from the number of successes achieved in national and international sports competitions. These successes have direct bearing with the indices of sports development, these are:

2.1 Sports policy

Which is the guidelines and blueprint or action plan for the development and management of sports (National sports development policy 1989). The main objectives of sports development policy of any nation include the following:

To provide the nation with the opportunity of measuring its sports might against those of other nations of the world with a view to establishing a respectable position for in the sporting community of the world.

2.2 Sport Personnel

Includes; coaches, sports managers, stadium managers and organizing secretaries. These are some of the personnel required for the management of sports development programmes. Coaches are responsible for the improvement of the level of skills of the athletes. There is no way the quality of participation of any nation in competitive sports can improve without having well trained and experienced coaches in various sports.

2.3 Funding

The importance of providing adequate funds for sports programme cannot be over emphasized; this is because as Bucher (1979) ^[4] stated, the services that are involved such as recruitment and training of personnel, purchase of equipment, construction of standard facilities, transportation and care of athletes all require large sum of money. Writing specifically about sports programmes, Zeiglar (1968), maintained that it is an area of higher expense and adequate funding is necessary if goals are to be achieved. Adequate funding is essential for effective sports development as enunciated by authorities like Levin (1972).

2.4 Sports Facilities

The provision of facilities in all sports is one of the major priorities in the promotion and development of sports. Responsibility for the provision of the facilities shall be shared by government, individuals and private organizations

2.5 Sponsorship

Sponsorships is the life blood of sports. In this day and age there exists a symbiotic relationship between sports and its sponsors. It is a relationship/partnership that plays to the relative strengths of the two parties and provides each with handsome reward. For example, football, boxing and tennis are visual entertainment at the highest level. All over the world sports thrive on sponsorship from corporate organizations and wealthy individuals.

3. Sport development the Nigeria way

Sports world wide have become progressively capital intensive; yet our history shows that government has almost single handedly shouldered the responsibility for sports development in Nigeria, especially when it comes to provision of sport facilities, programme, personnel and participation in continental and global competitions. There is minimal private Sector participation. Therefore, Government is forced to invest part of its scarce resources on sports development. There is minimal private Sector participation. Therefore, Government is forced to invest part of its scarce resources on sports development. The development and upsurge of interest in highly organized competitive sports in Nigeria a relatively new phenomenon dating back to the early 1980's when the Nigerian hosted and won the Africa Soccer Cup of nations in Lagos. The government of the Federal republic of Nigeria has made tremendous efforts towards the development of sport in the country. In most cases, substantial resources, both humans and material have been invested in a wide range of activities intended to bring about a strong base for a meaningful development of sports. An objective observation of these efforts reveals that the commendable objectives of the government and people of Nigeria for sports development are yet far from being realized. Expensive Commission of enquiry into the management of sports in Nigeria have been set and often well written reports are presented, accepted and published. In addition a sound sports development policy for the nation has been published. At present Nigeria has a Federal Ministry charged with the function of Youth Affairs and Sports.

The sports policy in operation is the 1989 sports policy, which outline the main objectives and programme areas, currently undergoing review. Sport requires a lot of funds, for this sector to be able to achieve desired result, all the others factors or indices depend solely on funds In spite of the annual budget provided by the governments in Nigeria, sport is still not adequately funded. Nigeria over the years have made some impressionable successes, it was this international sport successes that makes the international communities, focus their attention to find out the secret of its performance and successes; but all the successes recorded were by chance and not by share hard work; Questions are being asked, enquiries are being made and documenting evidence sought. How, where are the players bred? What is the entrenched system of development? What is the impact of the league? What part does administration play? Is coaching a big new 'player' in sport development? What and where are the facilities for training and for competition? What is the role of the sport

academies? What is the process that produced Nigerian players and athletes the likes of Blessing Akagbere, Mary Onyali, Victor Moses, Sam Mba and a host of others making a great impact in their various clubs and in international competitions?

There are many questions, but very few answers. AFCON 2013, of the 23 man squad, 6 were from the domestic leagues, something that has not been done since the era of Clemens Westerhof who took the national team to the country's first World Cup in 1994. So what is going on in the Nigerian domestic leagues now that could have made the difference? Apart from the fact that there had not been major sponsors of the league in two football seasons, the other 'new' development of note is the proliferation of stadiums with artificial turfs around the country. More state governments have ignorantly bought into the idea that artificial turfs are good for the game. They are confused by the beautiful look of the track and pitches from the terraces and the lesser cost of maintaining them. They forget that as a result of this 'development' the Super Eagles have been finding it difficult to find a suitable venue to play their matches in the country. That's why the World Cup qualifying matches are taken to Calabar, a city so distant from the centre of Nigerian football that it becomes almost a neutral ground for visiting opposition. That's perhaps why Kenya could come to Nigeria and steal a draw. It is only the powerful Nigerian businessmen behind this 'racket' of rubberized turfs that are smiling to the bank. It is pertinent to wonder why national team players have rejected the 'beautiful' stadia with artificial surfaces as venues for their matches; why Arsenal FC last year, and FC Barcelona, this year, have called off friendly matches in the country because the artificial turf grounds indicated for the matches are considered completely unsuitable for their players. The proliferation of these pitches does no good to Nigerian sport development. The grassroots football development and athletics programmes? The only evidence of any grassroots football and athletics programmes in Nigeria is about the establishment of academies everywhere. Many a foreign scout has come to Nigeria in search of these academies that are supposedly breeding the players and found nothing on ground. There are virtual academies. They are not institutionalized players and athletes are mostly from the streets and are assembled at weekends by all manner of agents and coaches in little crannies around the country and are formed into an 'academy' There are no proper programmes, no proper coaching, no proper infrastructure, no proper fields. Football in schools and athletics competitions that could have provided the excellent platform for development only receive token attention from the football associations and national federation, too little to account for anything.

3.1 Management of sports

The state of sport management is aptly captured in the CAF executive committee election and the episode of coach Stephen Keshi's resignation from the team a day after winning the AFCON 2013 trophy for what he described as disrespect by the Nigeria football federation members and lack of support for the team and Team Nigeria officials that participated in the 2012 London Olympics. There was a big and unhealthy disconnect, between management, the team, athletes and Nigeria athletics federation officials which account for the failure of the country's sports sector to grow at a rapid rate the lack of professionals to drive development in the sector as 83% of the sports administrators, lack the training to sport forward (Daily Trust March 28, 2012).

Nigeria has no structure in place to develop and train its coaches, apart from the occasional CAF and FIFA short-term coaching courses, the only institution that trains coaches in the country, the National Institute for Sports (NIS) is a pitiable sight. The NIS is merely going through the motions of training coaches, starved of funds and lacking quality personnel, facilities and the latest tools and equipment, its programs have become a case of 'garbage in, garbage out'.

The recent elections into CAF Executive Committee, where the President of the Nigerian Football Federation was rejected by the rest of the African member and the representative from small Benin Republic, convicted of corruption only a few years ago in his country, and suspended from African football by the African Confederation, was elected ahead of the Nigerian. That is an issue about what the continent thinks of the quality of sport management in Nigeria (Daily Trust Dec 12, 2012). The lack of knowledge in attracting sports sponsorships has been the bane of sports associations in getting corporate and individual sponsors to bankroll their activities. The immense presence of the corporate world in sports sponsorship in other parts of the world that provided structures on which those countries have programmed their preparations for international and domestic sports competitions; In order to operate and attain its objectives sports organization needs to have a functional set up that can implement sports development programme effectively. It is in the light of this need that substantial resources have been committed by government at federal and state levels to a wide range of programmes without appreciable result and the enactment of decrees intended to advance the pursuit of national objectives in the sports development sector. Where then lies the secret of Nigeria's recent success?

The major reason which tended to slow down our sport development efforts have been traced to two (2) major broad areas, (Venkateswarlu, 1997) ^[13] these are: Management and Funding. When the National sport commission was established by decree 34, there have been no fewer than thirty five (35) chief Executives of sport within the forty (41) year period 1973 - 2014. These supervising chief executives have been appointed either as Honorable minister or as chief executive/ chairman.

Going by the figures above the average management life span each Minister or chairman served is far less than his average management time, a period not enough to even plan for effective sport development. Because of the nature and manner sport is managed by (nonprofessionals) sport managers, players/ athletes have not been able to fully put in their best into the services of their father land; sport deserve the honour of being allowed to be run by the professionals people who know the area very well, where players/athletes find out that the sport managers are not only lacking in the knowledge of sport they manage not to talk of the politics of sport itself they get disappointed and this does not help their performance on the field.

Sport in Nigeria has over the past years suffered management, organizational and funding problems, these problems have increased with the growth in sporting activities and increased in mass participation.

Funding, sport generally worldwide have become progressively capital intensive, yet our history shows that government has almost single handedly shouldered the responsibility for sport development, when it comes to participation in continental global competitions, and provision of facilities. Our level of development dictates that only government is in a position to fund sport, because there is

minimal private sector participation, however in recent times sport has received support from business and corporate organizations.

3.2 Institutional Sport Development

Educators all over the world agree that the elementary or primary school is the foundation of formal teaching and learning of any skill or knowledge necessary for the maximum development of the child. Therefore, this level of education should provide a fertile base for a diversified and development of the beneficiaries. As far as sports development is concerned, the primary school should be the ideal ground for its take-off, through a sound programme of elementary physical education. A good physical education programme makes use of the natural activity drive of children, who even the most timid, enjoy movement. Nowhere in the world does sports develop in isolation of physical education which starts in the school through a formal graded instruction under experts trained for this purpose.

In Nigeria, the current status of primary physical education levels much to be desired. This is quite contrary to the practice in primary schools during the period described in Nigeria as the colonial days. That time, every primary school provided for a daily physical activities which were quite rigid and militaristic on the school time-table. It was compulsory for every class teacher to take his or her class out for thirty minutes' vigorous regimented physical activities. In addition to this, there was a break period daily where organized games and sports took place during this period. In this way every pupil was conscious of physical activities and sports. By the time a child completed primary school education, it was possible to identify children talented in sports skills.

The status of physical education and sports in secondary schools in Nigeria is not different from what is in primary schools. In the past, one of the complaints for lack of interest in sports or physical education among secondary schools in Nigeria was that it was not an "examinable subject" by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). As a result, there is no mention of physical education in the senior secondary classes in many schools. Hence the interest of the school authorities and the students in the subject is not encouraging.

In terms of sports many secondary schools have no provision for this in their school programme, except what is known as the annual inter-house sports competition which a few interest schools organize haphazardly once every year. In a situation like this, one wonders how the students are expected to compete in sports in which they do not have any meaningful training nor practice. With regard to sports equipment, many secondary schools are no better than some primary schools in the sense that they cannot afford once football for the students. All over the world, universities regard and include sports as components of the educational programme provided for their students. Nigerian University games Association competition affirmed that all over the world, universities have been the mainstay of sporting aspirations and achievements of the communities which they serve that such would be the case in Nigeria. Nigeria is in need of bright and talented sportsmen and women. Universities are vital not only to the development of sports in Nigeria but as a vehicle for moulding the characters of the youths who, through these institutions, are preparing themselves to be future leaders of the nation.

3.3 Structure and Organization

The overall direction of the present Nigerian sports structure and structure is provided by a sports Ministry attached to the

presidency; this is the umbrella organization for all other elements in the sports organization; the various sports clubs, the individual sports federations. The sports school (NIS), Coaching, competitions, researched and sports medicine and science. Two distinguishing features of the Nigeria Sports system are its central organization and its employment for specific socio-political objectives. This contrast with Western Sport management which runs the gamut from almost anarchic diffusion of agencies involved in sports (Britain) to structures strongly influenced by commercial concerns (Italy, U.S.A).

The policy of the Federal Ministry of Youth and sports has invariably been determined by the Government in power and it is the Government that appoints the sports Minister/Ministry Secretariat. The national sports Council of Nigeria (Sport Commission) is the main body controlling the management and organization of sports in Nigeria. Before this period, sports was being organized at regional levels in the former Western, Northern and Eastern Regions of Nigeria and with only two Association which existed at the national level, namely the Amateur Athletics Association of Nigeria (1944) and the Nigeria Football Associations (1945). The formation of National sports Council of Nigeria was in fulfillment of the yearning and aspirations of the people of this country to have a National Platform for Sports Management in Nigeria (Audu, 1997).

Although the Federal Government provided funds to the National Sports Council to meet its needs, there was no legislative provision for its existence until in August, 1971 when Decree No. 34 was promulgated by the then Federal Military Government establishing the National Sports Commission. The national sports Council of Nigeria (Sport Commission) is the main body controlling the administration and organization of sports in Nigeria prior to this period, sports was being organized at regional levels in the former Western, Northern and Eastern Regions. The management of the commission was through a board whose membership were nominees of the Federal Government. The Sports bodies under the Commission increased numerically.

The Decree establishing enumerated the Commissions function as follows:

To encourage the development and participation in sports in Nigeria and to co-ordinate and integrates efforts to raise the standard of performance of sport throughout the country (FGN National Sport Development Policy 1989).

It follows that all sports federations are ultimately dependent upon and guided by the Government, even though most world ruling sport bodies, contain regulations that, like those of FIFA, exclude any National Association that permits government bodies to interfere in its activities. In Nigeria the Nigerian Olympic committee is, contrary to International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulation, a Government agencies "constituted by Government controlled Sports Federations. Any decision on participation in the Olympic Games is made by the Government, often without consultation with the NOC or even the Sport Federations. The IOC, evidently turn a blind eye to these flagrant violation of their charters Venkateswarlu (1997) [13]. Sports management in Nigeria is like, the system of central planning and control sees to it that all levels co-operate in carrying out government sports policy from central to local governments, from enterprise management to clubs, from the armed forces to schools and colleges, from recreation officers to coaches. The advantages of such a centrally planned system are mainly in efficiency, consistency and ability to concentrate resources on government decided priorities, like Olympic and World Soccer Cup Successes. The disadvantages arise largely

in tendencies towards bureaucracy and lack of initiative and independent enterprise.

Since sports organization in Nigeria, comes under government control, it is perhaps understandable that the sports movement has been set explicitly utilitarian functions primarily for employment, for the all-round development of the model citizen, and for the pursuit of certain foreign-policy goals. These goals have naturally varied overtime and between governments. The reason for this politicization of sports, which parallels sports development in any modernizing societies, have to be sought in the enhanced role of sports as a social installation and part of the Cultural revolution in Nigeria.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is quite commendable that once in a while Nigeria has recorded brilliant successes in competitive sports at national and international levels. This is but a tip of the iceberg in the desired sports development objectives of the nation, because the success so far is limited to a few sports. The national objective has been hinted by the national sports development policy of 1989 and vision 2010 sports development initiative.

It seems, however that while policy objectives are very clear, corresponding actions seem not to be fully on ground towards goal realization. This perhaps explains the gap between intended sports development goals and actual achievements. Sport Policy inconsistency and instability and a clear and acceptable philosophy for the nation sport has been the bane of sports in Nigeria (Vision 2010 sport group final report 1997). This fundamental element is very essential as its the very foundation upon which all sports development programmes can be laid. Nigerians are engaged in sports but there has been no uniform statement of purpose towards working to achieve any meaningful result. Between 1971 to date when the National sports commission was established by Decree 34, there have been no fewer than forty three (43) Chief executives of sports within the thirty three (33) year period. These supervising chief executives have been appointed either as a Minister, or as chief executive chairman. Going by the above figures the average management life span, each executive served is far less than his average management time, a period not enough to even plan for effective sports development. Without an identifiable sports policy, it is difficult for the private sector to invest in sports in Nigeria. Patriotism is the greatest drive in sports development, what the country lacks now is the patriotism, which has delayed the development for the sector.

In the light of the above conclusion the following recommendation will be advanced; changes are inevitable but not always accepted, emulating the sport development policies of the developed countries; for example, in Nigeria presently there are about 28 sports associations under the ministry of sports, only football has a law and a spelt out policy to the detriment of other sports. Probably this might be the reason why government pay more attention and interest in football and the expense of other sports combined; these is unlike in the developed nations like Britain America, Australia and Germany which have an all embracing policies and laws. However, despite the determination and dedication of the government to promote sports, it cannot achieve its purpose unless it put in placed sports management experts to be at the helm of affairs of sports, this is the only way forward in which sports structure and management will received the co-operation of equally determined and devoted people in sports players/athletes. Such co-operation can be guaranteed only

when these people are directly involved in the organization of sports.

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