 Factors inhibiting the performance of college athletes in Nigeria colleges of education games association (NICEGA) competition

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ABSTRACT
Sports are an essential part of the normal school curriculum. However, Education managers and administrators tend to ignore their importance at the expense of academic work. There is generally hardly enough investment made on sports resources in most Colleges of Education. Success in sports is not only beneficial to the individual sports person for the glory of the occasion, but can benefit the academic progress of the individual too. Success in sports has some very basic requirements in its program implementation to benefit not only the individual participants, but the community at large. This piece of work was designed to work on some factors that hinder success in sports among the college athletes in the Nigeria Colleges of Education Games Association (NICEGA) competitions. The few factors that were being looked at in this study include the administrative problems, unavailability of sports facilities and equipment, inadequate sport personnel especially, teachers in sports and the coaches, the school policies, lack of
supports, Tension or Anxiety, improper nutrition and lack of adequate motivation. It is therefore concluded that all these factors are the key reasons for the poor performance of the college athletes in NICEGA competitions. Having x-rayed the factors inhibiting the athletes’ performance, it is therefore recommended that the College Stakeholders are to put heads together to improve on the number of facilities, their functionality and accessibility, College should provide moderate extrinsic motivation to the athletes also, the Government and the School heads should finance and employ adequate and qualified sport personnel.

Keywords: Sport, College Athletes, Factors, Performance, NICEGA

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports is a concept that eludes a uniform definition but possesses a universal language that permeates every aspect of human life be it religion, politics, economy, culture and education. Sports have been used all over the world as a tool for social development. It is also a powerful social activity for youth psychosocial development (Asagba, 2001).

In all institutions of learning in Nigeria, participation in sports is a requirement backed by government policy Federal Government Nigeria, 1989). The purpose of sports in educational institutions according to the policy should be generated from the aspirations of students. Asagba, (2001) posited that school sports form the bedrock of any meaningful sports development agenda in any country. Among the functions of school sports is to motivate all the students and undergraduates in all educational institutions to take part in sporting activities.

Jeroh, (2005) argued that there are quite a wide range of reasons that are believed to be behind the poor showing of Colleges sports at NICEGA competitions. The notable ones include the following: Poor preparations – not enough training due to inadequacy of funds; Poor funding (other sporting disciplines very little or no funding at all from Government); Very little athlete support from the corporate world; Inadequate exposure to international competitions; Poor infrastructure & other necessary equipment for sports development; Inadequate technical capacity for managers in various disciplines and very poor athlete motivation from coaches and managers; lack of database for athletes; absence of physical education in schools; absence of serious sports culture in all institutions; inadequate athlete support services and also that sports is not taken as a business. Inadequate sports equipment & facilities is the other main obstacle for athletes on the way to high level sports. The other hindrances include: lack of funding and inadequate exposure to international competitions. Favouritism from coaches and administrators; Inadequate training materials; and poor funding / motivation came out as the biggest weaknesses within the sporting system in Nigeria Colleges of Education.

Very few Nigerian Colleges of Education possess adequate standard sporting facilities and equipment that can be used in producing Olympic materials. There seems to be a little or no relationship between the State Sports Councils coaches, Ministry of Sports officials and the university efforts to produce star athletes. Yet the Colleges of Education are expected to perform miracles at international sports meets with all these glaring examples of shortfalls. Serious motivation strategies are either absent or not properly utilized by university coaches and sports administrators (Jeroh, 2005).

2. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECT OF COLLEGE SPORTS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE COMPETITION

Akraka (2004) stated that “The situation of the Nigerian youth of today is hopeless while the decadent state of sports in Nigeria has exceeded epidemic proportions in a country so well blessed with incredible raw talents. The problems which bedevil school sports are numerous but this paper attempts to discuss some as follows:

a. Administration

Our sports development problems are manpower and infrastructure-related administrators, coaches and sports leaders are the cornerstones of school sports, clubs and sports organizations, without which sustainable development cannot takes place. In other to ensure the future supply of suitably qualified and experienced sports leaders a structured approach is needed to manage the identification, training and development of sports coaches (Nwadiani & Nwabuwe, 2008). Most of the sports administrators interviewed in the study indicated that poor preparation by sports organizations pose a great challenge to participation of College athletes at NICEGA events. The other administrative challenges include:
1. Poor athlete selection procedures
2. Poor planning by various national sport governing bodies.
3. Low level of accountability and transparency.

b. Facilities and Equipment

Facilities for the basic instruction in physical education and sports are almost nonexistent in most Nigerian Colleges. According to Nwadiani and Nwabuwe (2008), facilities are very central to meaningful sports participation whether in school sports, amateur, recreational or competitive status. They are as important to the athletes as the laboratories are to the scientists. Without facilities sports cannot take place. Bucher (2001) opined that if well-maintained facilities are ensured with durability and maximum utilization, such may prevent sports accidents and wastage of funds, for facilities to be considered proper and adequate, they must be constructed according to recommended standards in respect to size, surfacing, lighting and all other safety features. This does not however imply that sports facility is the only variable that is necessary for sports participation; others such as equipment, supplies, finance to mention a few are indispensable complements to sports facilities. Having said this, the availability, adequacy, standard, funding, maintenance, supervision, safety, location and accessibility of sports facilities deserve adequate attention for sports facilities to contribute to excellence in sports participation (Adedeji, 1990). Facilities and equipment occupy such available place in all the ramifications of sports administration. Many research works on facilities, equipment, personnel and maintenance show that the areas are deficient and that sports management in the state and the country at large cannot function adequately (Awosika, 1996). The availability of adequate equipment and facilities play a major role in sports development. It would not be important to achieve satisfactory results from athletes, whose training facilities are inadequate or substandard which in actual fact will not compliment the work of the coach. Good sports programmes can function at full effectiveness only when they are supported with effective equipment in good conditions (Akara 2004). Athletes have come to realize that improved performances and development of special skills which can earn them better incentives can be enhanced through better sports facilities and modern equipment. Availability of facilities and equipment determine the standard and the success of a sports programme. We lack facilities and equipment and this account for one of the major reasons why Nigerian migrate to overseas. If facilities could be developed with all necessary opportunities, Nigerian athletes will cease to drift overseas (Omo- Osagie, 1986). In support of this view, Adamu (2002) stated that facilities and adequate provision of equipment have been identified as the major problems facing the Nigeria athletes because they performed better with facilities abroad with those at home. Dankadai (2011) stated that many of our play grounds have disappeared and most schools have no sporting facilities and equipment as was the case before. Over the years, sports grounds were converted into residential purposes and the few ones that still exists especially in educational institutions are not properly maintained.

He then listed the essential facilities that should be provided for both instruction and participation purposes as follows.

i. Basketball and volley pitches
ii. Tennis and Badminton courts
iii. Soccer pitch
iv. Hockey pitch
v. Access to a swimming pool
vi. A sport field with a 400m, athletic tracks round it which can successfully accommodate both track and field events.

It is true that facilities for many sports are not readily available in the nation’s primary and secondary schools. The situation is not even better in the tertiary institutions. Hardly can the nation’s Colleges of Education boast of institution with standard playfield and courts (Jeroh, 2007). This generally affects the College’s performance in NICEGA (Nigeria Colleges of Education Games Association) competition.

Inadequate Funding

Nwadiani and Aibueku (2007) opined that proper funding of our higher educational system is still a big problem and under these circumstances it is virtually impossible for these institutions to run comprehensive sports programmes or even afford to give scholarships to young sportsmen and women (Nwadiani & Nwabuwe, 2008). Of course the Federal Ministry of Sports or the state...
governments cannot themselves offer scholarships to young sportsmen and women to study in higher institutions in Nigeria or overseas in the U.S.A. and Europe.

The importance of providing adequate funds for sports programme cannot be over emphasized; this is because as Bucher (1979) 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, Ziegler (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 Adedeji, (1990). Shortage of funds has meant that there are no modern sports infrastructure in many of these educational institutions and the newly-created states. As an example many young athletes have never seen hurdles. Lack of equipment and few competitions have not helped matters. These generally reduce the performance of college athletes at the intercollegiate competition.

**Attitude of School Heads**

Many school heads should bury their heads in shame because they are part of the problem. Many school heads show interest in sports only when the annual jamboree called “inter-house, intra-mural, and inter-collegiate sport” is around the corner. The relationship between them and their games master/mistresses, director of sports blossoms but almost immediately after the event, sour grapes appear. Dignitaries are invited where the invitees are not keen watching their wards perform but listen to catalogue of problems presented in a welcome address and heavy donations follow. Money realized is not ploughed into the development of sports. Talents discovered after the sports meet are not encouraged to develop and grow (Jeroh, 2007). This is a major problem facing the development of college sports performance especially at the NICEGA competition.

**Inadequacy of sports professionals**

Many schools lack qualified physical educators to teach the rudiments of games and sports. There is no short-cut to the production of school athletes where there is nobody to assemble and teach them the basic skills, tactics, strategy and movements. It is therefore rather too unfortunate that sports have become an all comers affair because of the financial benefits accruing from it (Jeroh, 2007). Nwankwo (1986), pointed out that sports personnel or coaches should have the knowledge, research ability, ability to keep abreast with the least findings and possess all physical and physiological characteristics necessary for preparing athletes for national and international competitions.

**Tension**

Tension is that state of body and mind, which results from the internal and/or forces acting in opposition to each other such as emotional reactions like anger or fear. In one sense, tension may refer to the residual effect of mental or emotional strain reflected in a person’s appearance and/or behaviour; in another sense, it means tonus-a state of partial contraction when muscles are not actively working (Suresh Kutty, 2004). Excessive tonus is called tension, which may result from excessive stimulation or from strains and stresses upon the organism. This kind of tension is not as harmful as kind of tension which arises from a state of persistent unsatisfied wants and desires. Physiologically and psychologically as long as a person’s wants are unsatisfied he remains in a state of tension (Kamlesh 2011). Tension generally reduces the efficiency of athletes.

**Lack of Commitment to sport**

Commitment to sport and practice further means that an athlete may be committed in playing the sport for the inner pride and love of the game. This in turn facilitates athletes’ effort and learning, and the probability of avoiding practice decreases (Ekpe, 2001). Other strategies, as showing an corresponding tendency to avoid practice and focusing on winning during competition is associated with an ego-orientation. For example, an athlete that holds an task oriented motivational disposition, believes that hard work, development of skills, cooperation with other teammates leads to success. If an athlete holds an ego-oriented motivational disposition (that usually has been established in early childhood), the athlete will associate success with strategies such as cheating for instance. In such cases the athlete will have a strong belief that having high ability, be able to demonstrate this ability, with less effort as possible will lead to the outcome of achieving athletic success.

**Lack of Supports**

Inadequate donation of sports kit and equipment to schools, clubs, in the rural and urban areas, sponsorship of regular competitions at school, junior and senior levels in all sports across the nation, and, sponsorship of teams and clubs to compete in national tournaments gradually generally reduce the sport efficiency of the college. Like every other sector of the Nigerian economy, education and sports need a lot of private sector participation, sponsorship and business partnership, for these sectors to come alive again and contribute their quota towards national development. Private sector organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs, both local and international are very welcome to help grow the education and sports sectors in Nigeria (Amuchie, 2000).

Inadequate Sports Personnel
Oyedele (2000) reported that personnel are the officials that play in integral role in any competitive sport programme and should be well qualified, certified and licensed and hold membership in their respective, officiating association (Oyedele, 2000) stated that when considering the structure and operation of an organization, one must take cognizance of the personnel who provides the leadership and sees to the smooth conduct of the day-to-day affairs of the organization. He identified the tasks of a sport manager and personnel as being summed up and include planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting and valuating which in common parlance is referred to as “POSCORBE”. (Bucher and Krotee 2002) highlighted the key personnel in the tertiary institutions sports and other management and technical staff and coaches.

Administration of school sports is best left in the hands of qualified physical education teachers and the most qualified person among them should be made the director of sports because of all that it takes to coach and administer sports. Amusa (2000), contended that the sports manager must not only teach sports, and manager athletes, he is also expected to be able to speak occasionally in the public talk to groups, conduct news conferences, hosting visiting teams and in some institutions teach some physical education classes. He suggested that such a staff should be able to speak and write artfully and in a socially accepted manner. Chom (2003) supported the above statement that intercollegiate sports in tertiary institutions need a sound and well established programme for the training of the necessary personnel in sports. This will alleviate the shortage of qualified personnel that is experienced in the training of the various sports programme in tertiary institutions. 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. Inadequate sports personnel hinder the effectiveness of the college athletes even at the NICEGA competition.

Lack of Physical Education in School
Physical Education helps students to identify physical activities and sports suited to their abilities and interests and provide each student with positive experiences, with a view toward developing a positive self-concept and feeling of self-worth (Bucher and Wuest, 1987). Physical Education (P.E) may also help students to correct physical conditions that can be improved through exercise, especially among children and adolescents, in particular those with special needs, (Brisbane, 2000). It assists an individual student to achieve the highest level of physical fitness within his/her limitations. It also helps the adults especially the elderly to maintain a healthy, physical figure and shape, which supports easy, and comfortable movement for an individual at older age and therefore slows down the negative effects of aging. 15 Like all subjects, Physical Education including sports and games programs have standardized curriculum that is used in the country at Primary, Secondary schools, and Teachers training College levels. It is allocated a fixed number of lessons per week at each of the different levels. Unfortunately, the subject has been plagued with a negative attitude from teachers and administrators, as it is not examined at national levels, (Onyango, 2004). Consequently, the lessons allocated for Physical Education are often used to teach other subjects that are examined.

The success of the Physical Education (PE) program is pegged on the achievement of its objectives. However, the success of any sporting and games program is pegged on among others, the allocation of adequate time for acquisition of the necessary skills essential for successful participation at higher levels, the availability of diverse and good sports facilities and equipment that offers students opportunities to test their abilities to the limit, and a well laid down plan for sports activities that would not relegate academic work to the background. Teachers must therefore be ready and well trained to handle the workload involved (Onyango, 2004).
School Sport policies

One major problem facing sports development in Nigerian Colleges of Education today is the uncompromising attitude of the Colleges of Education to sport. Attitude as used here refers to the lack of sports and admission policies as well as negative disposition of many academic staff towards sports (Jeroh, 2005). The lack of functional sports policy, according to Mshelia (2002) also affects the development of sports in the Colleges of Education and thus affects the performance of the students. Ojeme (1998) asserted that there is no well thought out and documented policy for university sports. As a result, he concluded that sports development is not seen as a statutory duty of the Colleges of Education. Mgbor and Obiymei (2001) criticized the present status of sports in Nigerian Colleges of Education as being grossly under-funded, lacking adequate facilities and equipment, lacking adequate and competent staff, improper training programmes for athletes and lack of incentives to athletes and coaches. Sport according to them, is regarded as an area for the never-do-well in our tertiary institutions.

Quoting from Williams Committee Report of 1983 on the attitude of Colleges of Education to sports, Egborne (1986) said as follows: “On the whole it can be said with a great measure of truth that at the moment, the Colleges of Education of our land have not evolved any policies, and have not been able to evolve any policies to meet the problems (p. 160)”

On the attitude of the university students, the report says: “There have been occasions when university students who have been called to camp refused to show up. Usually, the reason for such refusal is connected with lectures and examinations (p. 160)”

Fund misappropriation in sport

Lack of funds has always been regarded as a major factor affecting sports development and consequently unsuccessful performance. However, in Nigeria, the issue of funding sponsorship and participation in big time sports fiesta is compounded by fund mismanagement, wilful embezzlement, misapplication and lack of accountability. For example, mismanagement and misapplication of funds was clearly evident in the perceived rationale for spending $220,000.00 directly on 11 athletes supposed to be potential gold winners at the 2012 Olympic Games (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2012). The NOC believed that the goal of winning 11 gold medals could be achieved by simply selectively inducing 11 ‘special’ athletes with money. According to the president of Nigeria Olympic Committee, each of the 11 athletes would receive $4,000 every three months in the lead up to the games. The athletes were not named, but were drawn from athletics, weightlifting, canoeing and taekwondo. Another instance was the report according to Ojo (2012) of the inability of NOC officials to account for $100,000 International Olympic Committee grant meant for preparation of the nation’s athletes for the London 2012 Olympics. Shortly before games, the sum of 2.3 billion Naira was released for Nigerian Contingent. The release of such huge sums of money weeks before the games was an instance of misapplication of funds which would have been used to ensure proper training arrangements for the athletes, had it been released much earlier.

Disconnection between existing sport research institutions and ministry of sports

Scientific and successful advancement in sports performance is a comprehensive phenomenon that mirrors dynamic combination of multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. Regrettably, there is disconnection between indigenous-based Sport Research Institutions (such as the Department of Physical and Health Education in Colleges of Education and Sports Institutes) and Ministry of sports with respect to addressing the critical needs of sport and translating sport research outputs into tangible services and products that will improve the standard of sport development programmes in the country. Additionally, no formal synchronised mechanisms for promoting and transferring research results from laboratories of research Institutions such as University to the end-users such as the Ministry of sports or Sport federations where such findings may be ultimately needed. Locally based research result in sports science are either treated with disdain or not utilized by sports administrators (Onyango, 2004).

Lack of Motivation

The motivation for participating in sports and striving for improvement varies considerably from athlete to athlete. Robbins (2001) defined motivation as the direction and intensity of one’s effort. While direction refers to an athlete’s decision to commit and turn up for training on a regular basis, intensity relates to how much the athlete is prepared to work hard during training sessions. Motivation can also be defined as both the internal (intrinsic) mechanism and external (extrinsic) stimuli that arouse and direct behaviour (Ajayi, 1999). Motivation energises and directly influences behaviour.

In sports, there is a great link between motivation and performance. Athletes who are intrinsically motivated involve themselves in activities for internal reasons such as personal satisfaction, pride and enjoyment. Athletes who are extrinsically motivated involve
themselves in sports for the purpose of attracting tangible and intangible rewards. Such rewards include promotion, money, trophies, salary increment, publicity and recognition.

Motivation in the field of sports refers to the reward given for excellent performance or success. A highly motivated athlete is likely to achieve better than a lowly motivated athlete because of the deliberate efforts that would be put into practice and competition. Omo-Osagie (2000) opined that performance over and above the call of duty should be rewarded. However, it is sad to note that players and athletes have often been laid off on account of poor performance without due consideration for other intervening variables.

**Nutrition**

According to The National Institutes of Health, a portion-controlled diet of healthy nutrients fuels exercise better than a diet filled with refined sugars that cause sudden drops in energy. Prior to the start of exercise, consume complex carbohydrates for a long-lasting energy burn; improve future athletic sessions by consuming additional carbohydrates and lean proteins following exercise. Carbohydrates rebuild glycogen stores, so consuming them makes it easier for your body to produce energy later; protein helps your body grow lean muscle mass. Finally, dehydration can reduce energy; drinking water or a sports drink before, during and after exercise keeps your energy level steady and strong.

**Environmental Conditions**

The NATO Research and Technology Organization confirm that athletic performance is not only determined by conditioning and nutrition. Extrinsic factors such as air temperature and altitude also affect athletes’ performances. Steep and mountainous terrain specifically increases metabolic rate and ventilation rate but decreases the ability to sleep, a dangerous combination. The study found that increasing carbohydrate consumption improved performance as well as mental focus.

3. **CONCLUSION**

The fundamental objective of school sports in Nigeria colleges is to facilitate the total, wholesome and fullest development of each student in terms of enriching his / her intellectual, vocational, emotional, personal-social and psychomotor resources (Mgbior, 2002). The effort of the schools towards achieving these objectives in practice has been limited to the activities of the schools with the classroom teacher as the leader. Interest and attention were then centered on the subject-matter studies as the sole avenue for influencing the educational gain of the students thereby neglecting and ignoring sports developments in School and as a result, sporting activities were underfund, sport facilities and equipment were inadequate and also lack of support and recognition. These and many more factors have contributed to the poor performance of college athletes in Nigeria colleges of Education Games Association (NICEGA) competition.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having x-rayed the factors inhibiting the college athletes’ performance, it is therefore recommended that:

i. The College stakeholders are to put heads together to improve on the number of facilities, their functionality and accessibility.

ii. College should provide moderate extrinsic motivation to the athletes

iii. The Government and the School heads should finance and employ adequate and qualified sports personnel.

iv. A reward scheme of prizes and scholarships will encourage better performances and dedication.

v. Special consideration should be given for the admission of talented athletes as done in the United States and Europe. While not supporting the admission of recluse in the name of sports, it will be sufficient if the prospective student who is good in sports has relevant credits in his area of interest rather than demanding compulsory credits in English Language and Mathematics.

vi. Physical Education and Sports should be made compulsory in our Colleges of Education and domiciled in the General Studies (GST) or General Education Studies (GES) Department. This provision will also serve the purpose of talent hunt, discovery and grooming.

vii. There should be a policy that clearly defines the position of sports in the Colleges of Education.

viii. Colleges should put in place a policy that ensures scholarships for athletes who win gold, silver or bronze medals at national competitions.
ix. Colleges should ensure the revival of the policy of automatic accommodation for star-athletes in campus halls
x. Private sector organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs, both local and international should help grow the education and sports sectors in Nigeria Colleges of Education.

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