



IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY, EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL AS KEY INDICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TOURISM IN NIGERIA

Nwaogu, F. C.ⁱ

PhD, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt,
Nigeria

Abstract:

Development of sport in Nigeria has taken the centre stage in public discuss most especially at different sport event fora. The need to facilitate and engender sustainable sport development through implementation of sport policies, effective leadership and engagement of qualified personnel to drive this money-spinning industry is becoming a recurring-decima as the sector is seen to be politicised through the engagement of unqualified personnel to run the affairs of the sector thereby creating chaos and instability while the resultant effect has been that of blame game culminating in the failure of our athlete to excel at the international level despite the raw talent available in the county that boasts of over 180 million population. It is on this premise that the study examines the implementation of government policy, effective leadership and qualified personnel as key indices for the development of sport tourism in Nigeria. The study suggests that policy should be implemented to the letter to ensure continuity and sustainability. The study also suggests that effective leadership is not only paramount to sports development but also germane in the drive for a sustainable sport tourism industry. The study also suggests that qualified personnel should not be compromised for mediocrity if development is to be achieved and sustained in the sport tourism industry.

Keywords: government policy, effective leadership, qualified personnel and sport tourism

1. Introduction

One of the objectives of the Sports Development Policy (1989) was to provide the nation with the opportunity to measure its sporting might against those of other nations of the

ⁱ Correspondence: email francis.nwaogu@uniport.edu.ng, francisnwaogu2000@yahoo.com

world with a view to establishing a respectable position for Nigeria in the sporting community of the world. Significantly, Parkhouse (1996) defined policy as a definitive course of action selected from various alternatives in the light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions. He opined that policies are developed from mission statements which should form the basis for establishing the operational procedures that should guide the organisations.

According to Bucher and Krotee (2002), the efficient management of sports requires the establishment of sound policies if it is to achieve its goals. They asserted that policies serve as a standing plan or guide of how sports organization will be run and how its activities are to be conducted. They explained that policies shape the procedures, rules and regulations of an organisation without which there is little to guide the activities and conduct of the organisation in the pursuit of its goals. However, Onifade (2000) noted that an analysis of the current role of the Federal Ministry of Sport as the representative of the federal government reveals sadly that the policy lacks definite focus. Though, the promulgation of Decree 34 of 1971 formalized and legalized the National Sports Commission (NSC) as the apex Federal government agency to control, regulate and organize sports in Nigeria, it was however elevated to the status of a ministry with a cabinet minister in 1975. Consequently, this action by the government which has given dual administrative role between the federal Ministry of Sports and the National Sports Commission has become a clog in the wheel of progress for the growth and development of sports in Nigeria.

Though, one of the reasons for the sports policy, even as entrenched in the Vision 2010, was to use sports as a means of employment generation, which unfortunately have not been achieved so far. Therefore, to achieve the above, there is urgent need to implement the policy to the letter. This became necessary according to Adisa (2004) citing Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1984) that policies are important management tools for implementing plans once it has been accepted by those who must carry them out. He submitted that effective policies must have the following characteristics.

- 1) **Flexibility:** That a policy must strike a reasonable balance between stability and flexibility because condition change, therefore policies must change accordingly. Similarly, some degree of stability must also prevail if a sense of direction is to be achieved, hence, there are no rigid guidelines to specify the exact degree of requisite flexibility but only the judgement can determine the appropriate balance.
- 2) **Comprehensive:** That a policy must be comprehensive to cover any contingency if plans are to be followed. Consequently, the degree of comprehensiveness depends upon the scope of action controlled by the policy itself.
- 3) **Coordination:** A policy must provide coordination of the various sub-units whose actions are interrelated. Without coordinative direction provided by policies, each sub-unit would be tempted to pursue its own objectives. However, the ultimate test of any sub-units activity should be its relationship to the policy statement.
- 4) **Ethical:** That policy must be in conformity to the canons of ethical behaviour which prevails in the society. Thus, the manager is ultimately responsible for the

resolution of issues which involve ethical principles. Consequently, the increasingly complex and interdependent nature of contemporary society has resulted in a number of problems involving ethical dimensions which are only vaguely understood.

- 5) **Clarity:** That policy must be clearly and logically written. The policy must also specify the intended aim of the action which it governs, define the appropriate methods and actions and delineate the limits of freedom of action permitted to those actions that are guided by it.

Policies have been known to have advantages that when properly implemented would not only ensure the success of an organization, but also the development of the sports industry. Masie and Douglas (1981) revealed the advantages of effective policies as thus:

- 1) That policies serve as precedents and reduce the repetitive thinking of all the factors in the individual decision. In other words, policies save time.
- 2) Policies aid in coordination. This implies that if a number of managers are guided by the same policies, they can predict more accurately the actions and decisions of others on the organisation.
- 3) Policies provide stability in the organisation and reduce the frustrations of members.
- 4) Clear policies encourage definite and forceful decisions by individual managers. Knowing the range and boundaries within which one can make a decision reduces the uncertainty about whether a decision fits in with the ideas of superiors.
- 5) Policies serve as a framework for guiding decisions by subordinates and enable managers to delegate authority for individual decisions.

Consequently, in view of the advantages of effective policies, it is expected that for the effectiveness of policies to be achieved, there should be periodic review of policies to be in conformity with what obtains at present in the administration of sports.

2. Need for Effective Leadership in Sports Tourism

In every organization, the role of effective leadership is paramount in the quest to achieve team/organization goals or objectives. Thus, the personnel saddled with the administration of sports tourism in Nigeria need to undergo periodic leadership training so as to be in tune with the present realities for the overall success of the set objectives. According to Brast (2003), leadership is defined as the process of influencing people and providing an environment for them to achieve team or organizational objectives. Similarly, Brady (2000) defined leadership as a process of influencing the activities of an individual or groups effort towards goal achievement in a given situation. Warren (2000) on the other hand, opined that leadership is a complex process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task, or objectives and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

The above submissions by the various scholars showed that the art of leadership is a pre-requisite for achieving team/organizational goals. It also showed that effective leadership can help fast track the development of the sports industry, most importantly, in the area of employment generation through sports tourism. Thus, sports managers are expected to exude great leadership qualities in the discharge of their duties to the Nation.

However, in recent time, research findings have shown that those saddled with the responsibility of running sports in the country have not shown enough commitment to earn the respect of the citizenry. Even though Morakinyo (2000) revealed that sports are a social phenomenon that has grown from its humble beginning of being an entertainment and recreation past-time to become a viable and prominent business phenomenon that could no more be ignored in the social, political and economic environment of any nation, this submission has not been translated into employment generation for as many that are unemployed even though they are eminently qualified to work in the sports industry.

According to Onifade (2000), sports have an influence on education, politics, economics, arts, defence, happiness and development of a nation and international diplomacy. However, Banjo (2005) observed that in order to achieve all the benefits mentioned above, sports has to be administered and organized properly. She maintained that when sports is properly administered, it becomes a powerful builder of character, framework for self-discipline and an opportunity to attain the highest level of performance.

Similarly, Morakinyo (2000) submitted that successful sports administration requires the service of a person who has been trained for the job and should not be left in the hands of those who do not know much about sports. Unfortunately, the reverse has always been the case because most sports administrators are politicians or non-professionals with little or no background in sports or sports-related activities. Even some that are professionals have also not delivered when given the opportunity. The above scenario brings to the fore the absence of qualitative leaders/leadership in the sports industry. Banjo (2005) noted that leadership should be seen as an important aspect of management because the ability to lead effectively is one of the keys to being an effective manager.

From the sociological point of view, Akintunde (2001) maintained that a leader in whatever form of organization has three principal roles to play. These include:

- 1) To establish the goal purpose or objectives of group, community or nation.
- 2) To create the structure in which the performance and the growth of the organization and nation are furthered.
- 3) To maintain and enhance the structure through personal discipline and exemplary behaviour that inspires confidence among the followers.

Therefore, it behoves the administrators/managers of sports to exhibit and maintain high moral character and patriotism required to achieving team/organization success in the discharge of their duties to the nation. The display of moral integrity and

a sense of professionalism could be the driving force required in generating employment in the sports economy sector through the promotion of sports tourism.

3. Need for Qualified Personnel in Sports Tourism

In any organization, there is a clear understanding of what the organization stands to achieve. In this regard, qualified personnel become inevitable. Iwezor (2009) stated that modern sports administration is more than just a response to traditional action or present realities, but rather, it encompasses a vision for the future and the strategies and implementation required for bringing about such a vision. According to David, Quick and Westerbeck (2003), the vision for a professional sports administrator is based on a well-rounded curriculum cognizance on the need to integrate sports industry knowledge with the fundamentals of management. According to Fasan (2004), the quality of sports personnel in terms of qualification, experience, exposure, skill, commitment, resourcefulness and dynamism will go a long way in determining a successful and an unsuccessful sports organization. He emphasized that the quality of an organization is to a large extent merely the summation of the quality of the people it hires to execute its marketing and other management functions. Thus, sports has grown into a big business and as such, its huge investment cannot be allowed to go down the drain, because it has the potential of generating employment most importantly through sports tourism and therefore become necessary to recruit qualified personnel that will assist in driving this objective into becoming a reality.

Adiat (2007) observed that sports administration and management have been invaded by untrained personnel and professional parasites who are more interested in what they will benefit from sports, thereby paying little or no attention to the improvement of sports and what will satisfy sports business customers at the detriment of the growth of sports. Similarly, Akanji (2009) identified the unqualified personnel at sports councils and among sports organizations as the bane of the growth of sports and sports-related activities in the country. He maintained that the majority of the workers at the councils are school certificate holders who do not meet the management and administration demand. Odusanya (2002) while supporting the above view, opined that originally, trained sports administrators shunned the sports councils and National Sports Commission (NSC) for the classroom and this action created a gap which was filled with untrained ex-footballers and ex-athletes to function as sports administrators till date. However, Fasan (2004) maintained that sports organization need to offer some value in the form of satisfaction to their customers. He opined that the employment of sports personnel with charisma, marketing skill, good human relation and focus will give the sports organization a competitive edge.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has been able to proffer a workable solution to our ailing sports industry which ought to be a money-spinning and employment generation industry but has remained comatose due to our lack of consistency in policy implementation, ineffective leadership and engagement of unqualified sports personnel. However, there could be turn around in the fortune of the sports industry if only the industry could be separated from politics and allow qualified and passionate sports personnel with sound leadership acumen to drive the policies to the letter.

5. Suggestions

The following suggestions are hereby made;

- 1) Policy should be implemented to the letter to ensure continuity and sustainability.
- 2) Effective leadership is not only paramount to sports development but also germane in the drive for a sustainable sport tourism industry.
- 3) Qualified personnel should not be compromised for mediocrity if development is to be achieved and sustained in the sport tourism industry.

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