

1 Professionalization of Sports Management: Antidote to 2 Dwindling Fortunes in Nigerian Sports

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4 Received: 21 December 2011 Accepted: 19 January 2012 Published: 2 February 2012

5 **Abstract**

6 The paper sees management as the greatest challenge confronting Nigerian sports. Sports
7 management is in the hands of non-professionals who know little or nothing about sports.
8 This has led to the dismal performances of national teams in world sports. A way out of this
9 imbroglio is to professionalize sports management and the Nigeria Association for Physical,
10 Health Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance (NAPHER-SD) as a professional sports body
11 is called upon to play a dominant role in this regard. It is recommended that Nigerian
12 universities should mount post " graduate programmes in physical education to train well
13 baked professionals in all areas of sports so as to complement the efforts of The National
14 Institute for Sports in Lagos.

16 **Index terms**— Allâ???"comers, Benchmark, Fire brigade approach, Specialized knowledge, Undeniable
17 conclusion.

18 Events across the globe especially in business circles have underscored the need for changes in tactics and
19 management approach to survive in the 21st century. Change, according to Fasan (2002), has become a prevailing
20 culture which every organization, be it private or public cannot underestimate. The philosophy behind change
21 hinges on the fact that managerial approaches and strategies of the 20th century may not be able to sustain the
22 trends in the 21st century. Sport is no exception.

23 Management of sports in Nigeria has become an all comers affair. While engineers are allowed to manage and
24 direct engineering companies and institutions, doctors to direct and manage the medical institutions, everybody
25 has been allowed to manage sports and sporting institutions (Abdulkadir, 2002). This clearly shows why Nigeria
26 sports is in shambles. The sports environment is becoming polarized and some of the operators do not have the
27 prerequisites to do the job but they merely learn on the job. Some have even been appointed on benevolence.

28 The desire to professionalize sports management has become a welcome idea following the trauma Nigerian
29 sports has brought to stakeholders. A cursory look at the Nigerian Olympic Committee in time past revealed
30 that physical educators were in the Committee, but now it will be a surprise if any is a member. What goes on
31 in the NOC is replicated in the various Sports Associations or Federations.

32 Traditionally, the physical education profession particularly in Nigeria was viewed basically as that of teaching
33 responsibilities (Mgbor, 2002). Other professionals in the field like Parks and Zanger (1990) have, however,
34 identified other occupational roles of the physical education personnel to include those of sports coaches,
35 sports marketers, sports programme manager, sports journalists, fitness programme manager, recreation services
36 directors etc.

37 Before progressing in the discourse, there is the need to know the meanings of the terms -sports management?
38 and -profession.? a) Sports Management Fasan (2002) sees sports management as an academic discipline, a field of
39 endeavour which encompasses other disciplines utilized to bring sports programmes nearer to the people, provide
40 heroic healthy struggle, graceful balance and harmony. It can also be seen as the application of management
41 theories and techniques to sports programmes, programming and execution.

42 Desensi and Rosenberg (1996) see sports management as a field interested in the organization and admin-
43 istration of specific sports -related areas. It is a field of endeavour involving leadership, decision making
44 process, staging of athletic events and marketing sports. ??helladurai (1983) sees sports management as the
45 activities of personnel in an organisation from different disciplines working with limited resources with the aim

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47 of accomplishing the goals of the organisation. Udo (2002) sees many specialized areas in sports management
48 and goes on to suggest that the professional in sports management in Nigeria, apart from the basic educational
49 qualification should be exposed to series of training courses, seminars and workshops in the various areas of the
50 sports enterprise after the initial training. To him, a bachelor degree in sports science (physical education) is a
51 pre -requisite, a necessary platform from where to start on a life long training and experiences on how to manage
52 sports.

53 Understanding the concept of sports management via its multifarious disciplines is a guide towards professionalism (Fasan, 2002).

55 1 b) Profession Defined

56 There are many definitions of the word -profession.? A thorough examination of the various definitions clearly
57 reveals almost the same idea(s) (Ladani, 2002). Hodge and Johnson (1970) define a profession as -a vocation
58 requiring some significant body of knowledge that is applied with high degree of consistency in the service of
59 a segment of society.? Frost (1975) posits that a profession is -a calling or occupation requiring specialized
60 knowledge, intensive education, a philosophy of commitment and service and high standards of conduct and
61 achievement.? Cratty (1971) identifies different criteria to define profession as follows: a) A profession provides
62 a service to improve the capabilities of members; b) Membership requires academic credentials of rather high
63 level; c) Professions constantly seek to improve the capabilities of their members and continually engage in self
64 -examination and evaluation; and d) Practices carried out within a profession are based upon a valid body of
65 knowledge which has been established as a result of a scientifically sound research programme.

66 Having perused the meanings of profession, there will also be the need to know the characteristics of a
67 profession. According to Ladani (2002) the nature of a profession is quite different from that of a trade
68 union, business concern or entertainment group. A true profession has certain characteristics as propounded
69 by Hodge and Johnson (1970), Singer (1976), Baley and Field (1976), Resick and Seidel (1978) In some well
70 known professions like law, architecture, accountancy, medicine or even in the armed forces, there are prescribed
71 lists of dos and dont's which serve as guidelines to the practitioners and which must be strictly adhered to before
72 a member is regarded as belonging to the particular profession (Udo, 2002). The implication of a profession
73 here is that there is an occupation or vocation which demands special education programme or training. Thus
74 a professional is an individual who is highly trained and makes a living by the practice of that for which he has
75 been trained. In sports such a person could be an athlete, performing in the sport he specializes in, a coach with
76 expertise in the sport he coaches, or an individual who has specialized training in sports management; a term
77 which is the core of this discourse.

78 Using the above characteristics as benchmark to assess our sports management, the undeniable conclusion is
79 that Nigeria has not started and except there are concerted efforts by stakeholders in sports, the situation will
80 continue to be bleak for us in the realm of success in our sports endeavour. The United States cannot be regarded
81 as a failure in world sports because sports management is a recognized profession and its services according to
82 Fasan (2002) are requested for in sports and other allied business. The schools, the media houses, fitness centres,
83 clubs, recreational centres, private organizations, marketers, sporting goods manufacturing companies need them.
84 This, however, is not the case in Nigeria because our career orientation and outlet are limited.

85 Sports have many divisions such as archery, athletics, basketball, power sports, baseball and other ball games,
86 gymnastics, equestrian sports, aquatic sports, cycling, motor bike sports, motor racing and miscellaneous sports
87 including traditional sports. Each of the sports or class of sports has its own peculiar nature, characteristics,
88 body of knowledge, facilities, equipment, rules and regulations which a new entrant must know and understand
89 to succeed.

90 Nigeria has of recent failed woefully in sports. In the just concluded All Africa Games in Maputo our
91 performance was dismal. Because soccer is about the most popular sport in the country, Nigerians cry out
92 anytime we fail to qualify for any major international competition. A case in point is the 2012 Olympic qualifier
93 in soccer for our U -23 team in Morocco. The performance expectation of sports operators is very high and
94 anytime we fail the blame is on the coach(es) as if other sports are performing magic. The sickness is Nigerian
95 soccer is contagious with other sports. The major problem with Nigerian sports is management.

96 While it takes some countries like the United States and Germany four or more years to prepare for any major
97 competition like the Olympics, Nigeria will normally wait for one month to the competition before embarking
98 on a fire brigade approach and we are expected to perform miracles. Adequate preparation is a desideratum if
99 we are to achieve appreciable results. Any sport manager worth his salt should be able to plan, direct, organize,
100 budget, delegate duties, control, report, co-ordinate, motivate and innovate as the case may be. These are all
101 duties of a professional manager.

102 Scientific and technological advancement have compartmentalized sports into many areas of specialization thus
103 creating a myriad of professional positions. For anybody to specialize in sports administration and management,
104 therefore, he or she must among other things study the nature of the particular sport and know very well their
105 body of knowledge as well as the practice of the sport (Ajiduah, 2002). He concludes that sport is so specific that
106 it may be necessary to study separately the administration and management of football, swimming, basketball,
107 tennis, etc because their characteristics and nature are quite different. This is not so in Nigeria where enthusiasts

108 are appointed to run sports and until we professionalize sports management sport will continue to nosedive in
109 the country.

110 Each of the positions of sports operators (managers) from the Honourable Minister/Commissioners for Sport
111 through Chairmen of Sports Federations to organizing secretaries and coaches is a profession under the Nigeria
112 Association for Physical, Health Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance (NAPHER-SD) but unfortunately
113 most of these positions are not occupied by NAPHER-SD professionals. The specific functions in each of the
114 positions may be different but the main characteristic of these professional practices is that they manage people,
115 materials and funds. Each of these operators is supposed to be well grounded in a body of knowledge from the
116 academic discipline of sports administration and management.

117 We have seen that the all -comers and fire brigade approaches to sport in Nigeria have not yielded good
118 dividends. Like some other well known professions like law, medicine and engineering, physical educators through
119 NAPHER -SD need to rekindle the flame of sports management by being involved and their success will definitely
120 remove sports administration and management from the hands of enthusiasts and opportunists. One needs to
121 train to acquire the skills of competence from a body of knowledge that will make him / her a success in his /
122 her chosen field of human endeavour. Professionalizing sports management will remove obscurity which physical
123 education is currently suffering from and bring practitioners to prominence.

124 To professionalize sport management in Nigeria, physical education has a great role to play. The pedagogical
125 nature of the subject as it is now in our universities and colleges of education need radical changes. The
126 curriculum has to be redesigned to put in practice the multi -faceted nature of sports. The universities through
127 their departments of physical and health education need to mount post -graduate programmes in specific areas
128 of physical education tilted towards sports management to compliment what goes on at the National Institute
129 for Sports in Lagos.

130 For now, there should be a gradual replacement of non professionals from managing sports. Alternatively they
should be sponsored to study courses that will make their services relevant to sports.



Figure 1:

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