



Managing Male And Female Athletes For Increased Sports Performance In Public Universities In Rivers State

Dr. Deemua G. A.

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education

ABSTRACT

For any organisation to survive, it must depend on the good welfare package which such organization has for the staff and students inclusive. Managing student-athletes behaviours pre-requisite for increased sports performance at the university level. However, in recent times, university administrators have not been giving attention to properly managed and prepare their athletes for national and international competitives. These problems like inadequate funding, lack of facility and training equipment, poor training programmes, poor motivational techniques and, lack of incentives have been attributed to over management of athletes' behaviour which has affected the performance of athletes. Parents, coaches and stakeholders in the sports industry need to play as stronger educational and supervisory role so that these young athletes will be able to acquire both physical and intellectual-skills which will enable them to live well and help in the development of the society.

Keywords: Management, Athlete, Performance, University.

INTRODUCTION

The sport environment consists thousands of sport organisations on several levels. These sport organisations organized sport competitions at different levels ranging from intramural, interscholastic and intercollegiate sports. At all levels, some sport organisations are more successful than others. This paper presents an overview of management and leadership theories and concepts that an aspiring sports manager/leader must comprehend, understand, apply, evaluate and syntheses in order to achieve the success of the organization. For any sports organization to achieve its aim and objectives, it must depend on the good welfare package which such organization has for the staff (coaches and managers) and athletes, and the universities system is not left out of the assertion that for athletes to strive depends on managing the quality of manager/leader and athletes within the system. Olajide (2014) commented that a high quality and well-motivated staff and supportive professional cultures are essential in building education excellence. University, as the highest education institutions is statutorily charged with the responsibilities of producing individuals who can fit properly and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. As stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) universities, therefore, function to achieve the following goals;

- 1) To contribute to national development through high level managing training
- 2) To develop and inculcate proper value for survival of the individual and the society

- 3) To achieve both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be staff-reliant and useful members of the society
- 4) To develop individuals intellectual capacity to understand and appreciate their local and external environments
- 5) To promote and encourage scholarship and community service
- 6) To forge and cement national unity
- 7) To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

On this note, the success and development of sports of any university depend on the quality system being applied in managing male and female athletes of the university. In order to make them perform better than their maximum efforts, the university management must adopt motivational approach in dealing with them rather than depending on an enforced operation with them. In the same vein, the researcher observed that for male and female athletes in universities across the nation to achieve reasonable and high level of performance, the management of universities have to live up to expectation by providing those things that can professionally and psychologically make the athletes to stay on the top and effectively achieve their competitive awards, which include praise, grades, money, trophies, gifts, jobs, medals and having a sense of belonging and accomplishment etc.

Dictionary.com (2014) saw management in even broader sense as involving regulation, administration, superintendence, care, charge, conduct, guidance, and treatment while, Desensi, et al. (1990) sees management as all-encompassing and represents the myriad of sport related areas, including facilities, hotels and resorts, public and private fitness and racquet clubs, merchandizing, and collegiate and professional sports. They defined sport management as “any combination of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling-budgeting, leading and evaluating within the context of an organization or department whose primary product or service is related to sport (p. 33).

Managing athletes' behaviour on the other hand, is the wide variety of skills and techniques that sports organizers use to keep athletes organized, orderly, focused, and attentive on task for accomplishment of purpose. It was evident that during normal competitive and training sessions, some athletes are very busy doing related, unconnected and very distractive things from the ongoing task. Researchers have shown that the attracting sports environment and assigning well defined roles to the athletes enable him to focus on the activity and to acquire mastery over the skill. In today's highly competitive sports set-up, a highly motivating environment is a must as we learn and enjoy learning if the environment fosters such learning (Singh, et al.; 2014).

Invariably the researcher takes a critical look at the factors that contributed toward effective and efficient management of male and female athletes for increased performance as identified by Singh, et al. (2014). However, the following motivational factors may give credence for increased sports performance.

- 1. Knowing your Athlete:** Each athlete comes from a different background with varied experiences and having different degree of motivation. They have different attitudes and opinions toward sport events and people in the sports environment. Each will have different interest and desires. Thus, obviously what motivates one athlete may not motivate another.

Knowing all these individual differences will enable a teacher or coach to motivate the athlete through suitable ways, and in appropriate manner.

2. **Equipment:** In the present high technology scenario, equipment provided to an athlete assumes great significance. Latest gadgets, well maintained and attractive equipment not only have aesthetic appeal but also initiate the urge to participate in the activity. On the other hand, outdated worn out and ill maintained equipment can turn off the zeal of even an enthusiastic athlete.
3. **Environmental Factor:** The sport environment we provide to the athletes, undoubtedly, has a very important role in motivating athletes. A well-lit, well ventilated, well decorated and well equipped gymnasium or a swimming pool can attract even an unwilling individual. Similarly, well maintained grounds, fields and courts prompt an athlete to understand his work out. In today's highly competitive sports set-up, a highly motivated environment is a must, as we learn and enjoy learning if the environment foster learning.
4. **Identifying Incentives Factors:** If an athlete perceives that any particular kind of experiences, are available to him in a given sports, and he feels that this will be pleasant, enjoyable or satisfying, then he will choose to participate in that game or sport and not any other. If on the other hand, his expectations are not fulfilled, or his experiences are unpleasant, he will quit that game or sport. It is, therefore, necessary to identify and discover what it is about sport itself, (particularly its nature and demands) that motivates an athlete/player to participate. According to Alderman and others, the incentive value of any goal as perceived by an individual, determines his motivation to participate in such activity.
5. **Role of the Mass Media:** Mass media also plays an important role in motivating athletes. Tv and news coverage of their performance, and even of training sessions do provide them with a feeling of pride, prestige and recognition. Such coverage not only provides boost, to their self-confidence and competence, but also motivates other young athlete to emulate their feet (P. 185).

TRAINING METHODS

It is a fact that apart from other factors, the performance of an athlete in any game and sports is mainly dependent upon physical, physiological and psychological factors. Individuals differ in physical abilities, mental abilities, physiological capacities and personality traits. The individuals not only differ from one another but also differ from one ability to another within their own self.

Exercise physiologist, sports scientists, physical educationist, and sports training experts have been dividing different means and methods to develop these human abilities and capacities. On the basis of various experiments, new methods have been designed to develop physical abilities of the individual. It is said that human capacities and capabilities are unlimited which seems to be true when we see the unthinkable performance of world-class sprinters, middle and long distant runners throwers and swimmers etc. physical fitness or conditioning of an individual besides other factors is the basis of such performances.

In a nutshell, various studies have shown the impact of training on athletes' performance facilitates and maximize productivity. This implies that achievement of outstanding sports performances of contingents is based on good programme of athletes' training and monitoring of athletes progress. From the foregoing, it is apparent that major organizational task in the aspect of athletes training

involves in initiating programmes for talent hunt and discovery, grooming of discovered budding talents, training and monitoring of athletes programme.

Opatala (1999) lent credence to this, when he stated that sport improvement in athlete performance does not come in a sudden flight, sports organizers must evolve a training programme for athletes that would facilitate the attainment of high level performance gradually through progressive training.

The sports organizers must ensure that there are better methods of training like continuous method, interval, repetition, competitive and trial methods, among others. He must invest in the welfare as well as the training of athletes depend on the talents and skills of the athletes (Paraded in competitions). He must also control athletes' behaviours administratively both during training and in competition.

MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS IN SPORT(S)

Chelladurai (2001) notes that the functions that are most applicable to the sport environment consist of the following

Planning

May be the most important management function. Chelladurai (2001) defined planning as "setting goals for the organization and its members and specifying the activities or programs through which to achieve those goals" (p. 5). In planning, the leader must identify the desired outcome, understand what environment constraints are present, and establish activities that will lead to the desired outcome. Many organizations are doomed to failure because they neglect planning. Successful planning incorporates all levels of management, and leaders must clearly communicate the intended outcomes and specifically how the goals will be achieved. The leader must also recognize that he or she needs to be flexible in order to adjust to real-life situations that arise that were not addressed in the original planning.

Chelladurai (2001) describes organizing as the process of breaking down the different jobs that must be completed to achieve the organizational goals, and defining the relationships between the jobs and the people in the organization. This function of management requires a manager to be able to see the big picture of an organization while also assigning the smaller tasks to the right people within the organization who execute the day-to-day operations. Management is expected to align every aspect of the company with the organization's mission and objectives. A manager must be able to effectively place personnel in the right job and communicate each individual's role in fulfilling the organization's goals.

Leading is another important function of management. Chelladurai (2001) recognized that planning and organizing "set the stage for work activities" (p. 97) and states that leading deals with influencing or motivating employees to execute the responsibilities assigned in the planning process. A leader may have a good plan and have the employees organized well, but if he or she cannot influence the members of the organization to perform, the organization is doomed to failure. Leadership styles and sources of power are relatively important in enabling a leader to influence the members of an organization.

He also defined evaluating as measuring performance and comparing that performance to standards set in the planning process. A manager must evaluate many different aspects of the organization ranging from processes to personnel and take the feedback received to either reinforce the process and/or the behaviour of those in the organization, or to take corrective action.

These four functions are the foundation of managing an organization. Both Leland and West clearly planned activities, organized people effectively, led them and used evaluation to measure their performance. Sport leaders who practice these functions increase their chances of success for the organization they lead.

THE MAJOR ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSITY SPORTS

Intercollegiate sport, otherwise known as university sports was become part of the Nigerian sport culture and provides a significant experience for many who take part in it. The large, diversified intercollegiate sport programme has become big business for some schools especially in Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA). Most universities have individual and sport teams in a variety of sports. Thousands of student athletes take part in competition that seems an appropriate extension of school because of the opportunities it provides youths to grow in a sport, and the cohesive force it creates in a school or community. Like other parts of the sports cultural, however, university sports is not without problems. The major issues and challenges in university sport are as follows;

Performance-Enhancing Drugs

Drugs are a problem for many school-athletes. For athletes, however, there is a special set of problems that have to do with drugs taken to improve performance. The Nigerian athletes, including Deborah Odeyemi, Chinazo Amadi, Samson Idiata (Athletes), Sunday Eze (Para-athletics) and Powerlifted, Thomas Kure, have been banned for taking part in any sporting activity for a period of four years. Nigeria also takes the prospect of losing the medals the slammed athletes won for the country at the African games. <http://en.m.wikipedia>. The use of anabolic steroids (male hormones that help to increase strength and allow athletes to perform more work in training) has begun to show up even at the university sport level. In a sport environment, where young athletes are striving to improve performance, hoping to get an athletic scholarship to college or university, and socialized into a view of sport that accepts the use of ergogenic aids in the form of nutritional supplements, it is no surprise that many young athletes use supplements including creative (which supposedly increases muscular performance in brief, high intensity activities), is available over the counter and is now widely used by adolescents athletes (Siedentop, 2001). Coaches, athletic trainers, and parents need to play a stronger educational and supervisory role so that these young athletes do not use questionable aids that may prove harmful to them in the long run.

Lack of Adequate Training and Coaching Experience

Sport can only be coached successfully and effectively by a specialist who is expected to teach about knowledge and skills of the sport to the learners for improved performance. Signh, et al.; (2014) sees coaching as the process of imparting techniques, skills, knowledge and attitudes, which is aimed at improving the performance of the individuals by using methods appropriate to their ability and aspirations. With the improved status of sport in our society the provision of coaching has been very important, although the need for competent coaches has long been recognized. Many countries

have a very effective coaching programme due to which they have excelled at international levels at different games and sports.

Without the provision of competent coaches, any sports person's potentials will never be fulfilled. There is need for a comprehensive education programme for the coaches at the national level, from that of the beginners to that of the Olympian. Unfortunately in our country there is a lack of proper coaching plan at all level. There is a no coaching programme at school level what to talk about effective coaching. There must be a systematic coaching plan at all level (p. 249)

In the same view, National Institute for Sports (2001), posited that majority of the technical personnel in our sports industry are either unqualified or are inadequate in number to meet the demands of the industry. Even the qualified few are lagging behind in modern day's sports technology. Coaches in public universities are not only grossly inadequate to conduct an effective sports programme, but also in most cases poorly trained or unqualified for their jobs. Where there is reasonable number of them, most of them are not formally trained as coaches. Therefore, with low level of training and inadequate coaching experience, athletes cannot improve on their performance and will not be able to meet their full potentials.

Treatment of the Student Athlete

There are many student-athletes in sport programmes in Nigerian colleges and universities who fit well the best possible image of how sport and academic life can be combined such that each is enriched by the other for a better total college experience. The expectation of Nigerian universities is to produce top level athletes for the country. On this basis, the public universities recruited student-athletes and game them scholarship in pursuance of their academic career. These students have been intensely prepared both for national and international sports competitions. And as such they have been winning medals and boost the image of their respective universities.

However, the unfortunate incidence is that many athletes focus most of their attention on their sport. They miss more classes and participate in fewer other university activities, many suffer from chronic or frequent injuries and fatigue. These athletes tend to attribute actions to external influences more than do non-athletes; that is, they report less of a sense of personal control and having little opportunity or time to participate in personal-development activities on campus (Wrisberg, 1996).

Many sport scholars believed that scholarship athletes are badly exploited by the system (Sack, 1977). Scholarship athletes can receive nothing more than room, tuition, board, fees and books at least, not legally. Clearly, few athletes feel exploited. Most are happy to be where they are, and many feel extremely lucky to have been awarded the scholarship. The charge of exploitation comes from the huge financial rewards the institution can achieve which are not shared in any way with the athletes.

Adulaye (1986) as cited in Deemua (2015), also deposited that the uncompromising attitude of some lecturers who see students participation in university games as waste of time and regarded almost as a crime. Student-athletes in some cases have been victimized and left with their own faith.

Winning at all cost syndrome

Each year of competition, the Nigerian Universities Games Association (NUGA), put several university athletes and coaches on sanctions because of recruiting violations. The recruiting of athletes to play on university teams is governed by rules established by Nigeria Universities Games Council. The rules are expected to protect all athletes and to ensure free and fair competition among participants.

What is sad and alarming about many recruiting violations is that they are done with the help and, in some cases, at the insistence of influential alumni and friends of the universities, who are often in positions of prestige, trust, and power within the community. Recruitment violations occur because the pressures to attract the best athletes are so strong because pressures to have a winning programme are immense. The pressures to have a winning programme exist because of economic factors, as well as because of the status that accrues to those associated with winning programme at universities particularly alumni and friends of the university (Siedentop, 2001:150).

Coaches sometimes succumb to those pressures. In other situations, coaches sometimes initiate the cheating themselves because they want so badly to win or to achieve their careers. For instance, during NUGA competition at UNMAID, coaches in a desperate move to keep their jobs, with a few weeks to the competition, go all out to recruit more mercenaries who are established stars to win medals for them and they were discovered and sanctioned. Direct cash payments, sponsorship, scholarship, travelling tickets, free accommodation, and sexual favours have all been used to lure young athletes.

CONCLUSION

The government established public universities to meet the yearning and aspirations of students inspite of their academic pursuits. Athletic training in an attractive environment is a pre-requisite to increased athletes performance.

Recommendations

1. Sports administrators should thrive to make available every provision to lure young athletes evolve in sport.
2. Parents and stakeholders in sport need to have a strong educational and supervisory role so that these young athletes do not use questionable aids that may prove harmful to them.

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