

EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING IN THE NEW NORMAL WORLD

A Festschrift for
PROFESSOR RASHID ADEWUMI ADERINOYE

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Chapter 74

Multidimensional Role(s) of Sports in Community Development in Nigeria

O. Adisa, O. Ifeta and O. A. Adegbesan

Introduction

The role of sport in contemporary society is multidimensional. Sport is an integral part of the modern society with its influence being felt in all facets of the community such as health and education, community cohesion, national unity, recreation and economic growth. Governments all over the world have realised the multidimensional role of sport and have been utilising sport for community development. Study on the role of Sport in the society is usually carried out because it is closely linked with how people think about, behave, perform and see the world.

The overwhelming influence of sports in nations has led to the evolution of extensive bureaucracy to support and develop sport. Sport is more than ever before, commanding global attention. Its influence on world peace, economy and the development of social relationships cannot be underestimated. It is against this background that most nations have come to appreciate the need to invest heavily on it. Sport as a social factor has over time assumed an influential status. In the assertion of Mars (2003), sports tend to exert more influence on people's behaviour than religion or politics. The level of effects may vary from one country to another, although national and international sports seem to exert equal force all over.

The value of sports on behaviour is quite overwhelming. It is in this context that the accrued benefits may be adequately harnessed. Over the years, sport has been monolithic in nature and practice. The Coubertin era with its promotion of one dimensional competitive culture gave credence to this approach. Against this narrow perception, Harvey, (2002) has argued that the roles of sports is enormous given its highly symbolic, metaphoric and polysemous nature. Consequently, in this regard, Constant as cited in Harvey (2002), identified three dimensions in which sports can make contributions. These are social cohesion, citizenship and moral qualities dimensions. However, this can only be made possible when it is perceived as shared common values in which everybody has a stake in the challenges and belong to the same culture.

Society, today, is growing technologically and sports and physical education can be utilised as tools to affect functional effectiveness in this technological era. In this regard it becomes imperative for experts in physical education and sports to also bring to fore, through research, multidimensional roles of sport in nation building and identify issues and problems peculiar to their locality as well as to a wider global context so as to ascertain how these could lead to the development of physical education and sports. There is no

doubt that utilisation of such information technology to drive a technologically sophisticated society will enhance better humanity. Notably, sport and physical activities are closely related with man's existence, history, culture, economy and politics (Park, 2003). The question therefore is to what extent has this been fully explored? Much may not be said of the primitive days of man, but with the advent of civilisation, the expectation is that much may have been achieved. This also stems from the conception that physical activity play a significant role in attaining the desired social construction. This may also be one reason why Physical Education (PE) and sports was introduced into the school curriculum. There is the tendency that PE ensures wholesome development of the individual. Against this background, policies frameworks(s) in education and sports were explored to guide the needed potentials that could be harnessed and used for the betterment of Nigerian communities. The extent, to which sports play multidimensional roles in community development and how such could be realised, were explored in this paper.

Understanding Community and Community Development

The community description should have basic characteristics of individuals living together with occasional daily interactions but differ in terms of structure and multilevel guiding laws. This is in furtherance of the traditional community description which refers to the community as people living in a place who have face-to-face contact with each other (Goel, 2014). There are so many types of communities and it is important to note that like a magnetic force there is always something unique that holds each community together. It is certain that different units in the community share something or a couple of things in common. Such similarities can encapsulate one or more of the following; financial/economic strength, race and ethnicity, language, occupation (occupational settlements), personal interests, etc. In modern times communities have evolved to include online and virtual spaces.

The Ultimate goal of all communities is growth and development. Holistic and sustainable Community development is pivotal in the overall success of any nation. The concept of community may encapsulate a variety of constituent parts from individual to infrastructural development yet the concept is relative to specific development goals set by community leaders. It is important to note that most community development goals are usually time bound as various circumstances create a need to re-evaluate gains, processes, machineries and principles underpinning the desired community development goals. The concept of community development is not new, there have been various attempts to define and explain the concept of community development and to position them based on local government, state, regional, national, continental or global goals and objectives.

Anikeze (2010) posited that "community development as a process of social action in which people take action to meet those needs with maximum reliance on their own initiative and resources, supplemented with assistance in any government and non-governmental organisation".

Ekong, (1977) cited in Anikeze (2014) and Adekunle (2019), sees community development as any action in a locality by any agency with the primary intention of bringing some benefits to such locality. This implies that community development is a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with active participation and on the initiative of the community. Obodoechi, (2006) cited in Anikeze,

(2014) and Adekunle (2019) spells out the objectives of community development in Nigeria as follow:

- (i) To improve life at the local community level as much as our human and material resources can carry us.
- (ii) To develop all aspects of community living equitably so as to avoid in balance or neglect of any area of living.
- (iii) To achieve a self-generating breakthrough in productivity and to raise the production potentials by stimulating the human and physical process of change.
- (iv) To minimise poverty and unemployment in the communities.
- (v) To make families economically viable and to cross over the poverty line.
- (vi) To provide governmental services to communities.
- (vii) To explore and use technical assistance available from outside the community.
- (viii) To cooperate with and coordinate state and national development plans, etc.

Roles of Sports in Community Development

Every sector or constituent part has roles to play in community development. The strength and contribution of each part is what determines the overall strength of the chain of community development. This also means that the actions or inactions of various subsets within the community all determine if goals and objectives set are actualised. The sports sector of the community is no different from all other sectors as everything within the community is interconnected. The impact of sports on the Nigerian community cannot be downplayed or overemphasised in the grand scheme of things.

Sports for Community Fitness and Health

Sports and general physical activity are essential for individual and community physical fitness, health and wellness as these have a direct and significant impact on overall productivity of individuals within the community.

The World Health Organisation (2003) stated that regular physical activity, active play and sports can be a practical means to achieving numerous health gains, either directly or indirectly through its positive impact on other major risks, in particular high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, tobacco use and stress. Fox and Mathews (1981), Davis and Butler (1997), and the United Nations [2003] cited in Nmamo (2018) all concur that engaging in sport is associated with significant health benefits. They argue that sport and physical activity have the potential to reduce the risk of lifestyle or non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression. Sport and Physical activity are also believed to help prevent and reduce hypertension, control body weight, prevent and control osteoporosis and help manage chronic pain.

WHO (2003), further provided a breakdown of benefits of sports and general Physical Activity.

Regular physical activity:

- (1) reduces the risk of dying prematurely;
- (2) reduces the risk of dying from heart disease or stroke, which are responsible for one-third of all deaths;

- (3) reduces the risk of developing heart disease, colon cancer and type 2 diabetes;
- (4) helps to prevent/reduce hypertension, which affects one-fifth of the world's adult population;
- (5) helps control weight and lower the risk of becoming obese;
- (6) helps to prevent/reduce osteoporosis, reducing the risk of hip fracture in women;
- (7) reduces the risk of developing lower back pain can help in the management of painful conditions, like back pain or knee pain;
- (8) helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints and makes people with chronic, disabling conditions improve their stamina;
- (9) promotes psychological well-being, reduces stress, anxiety and depression;
- (10) helps prevent or control risky behaviours, especially among children and young people, like tobacco, alcohol or other substance use, unhealthy diet or violence.

Sports for Community Youth Engagement and Social Integration

One key strength of sports is the ability to engage leisurely and professionally a very large population of people. With Nigeria's constantly increasing population sports is a significant to for youth engagement and to help prevent or control behaviours, especially among children and young people, like tobacco, alcohol or other substance use, unhealthy diet or violence (WHO, 2003). From a personal and moral development perspective, it has been argued that sport participation enhances morality and leads to positive character building experiences (Bredemeier and Shields, 2006). This proves useful in helping youths learn the importance of conforming to societal norms, rules and standards.

Sports knows no boundaries and is profitable for all irrespective of age, race and physical ability or inability. This is buttressed by Green and Hardman (2000), who described sports as, among other things, an arena of equal opportunities and racial equality. The world has become a global village and social integration is a phenomenon that every developing community must tackle. Heckmann and Schnapper (2003) defined social integration as the inclusion of individuals and groups into an existing social structure, an interactive mutual process, the outcome of a conscious and volitional interaction between individuals or groups, that brings changes to the settlement of the society. The integration of migrants is of vital importance for maintaining social cohesion, but also for the economic development of any country; there is now wide recognition of the contribution of migrants to the demographic and economic growth (Sanchez *et al* 2010).

Sports for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

As communities become more diverse and social integration constantly poses various challenges from racial to religious tensions, sports has become an effective tool in dissolving conflict and promoting peace and harmony. The use of sport for the purposes of promoting mutual understanding, conflict reconciliation, and co-existence in deeply divided societies has been an increasingly important topic, particularly in conflict and post-conflict societies (Galily *et al* 2013; Kertcher, 2012; Lidor and Blumenstein, 2011; Rookwood, 2008).

Combating war and violence is important in order to promote inclusive and peaceful societies for sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to promote

access to justice for all and the establishment of effective, accountable institutions that enable everyone to live in a peaceful society. This goal emphasis one of the cardinal objective of the role sport could play in our society.

Many Nigeria Communities experience one crises or the other bordering on ethnic strives, religious crises and terrorism. Sport no doubt could be used to overcome some of these challenges. Sport's fundamental values, such as respect, diversity, fair play, non-discrimination and equality, are also the fundamental principles of peaceful and inclusive societies. Through the organisation of friendly matches and major international events, sport is a powerful communication tool for spreading messages of solidarity, respect for human rights, reconciliation and peace. Sport can help to rebuild societies emerging from conflict and to foster dialogue and social cohesion (SportenCommium, 2020).

Sports has been effective in peace building in some spheres but this doesn't always apply to all community tensions. Krasniqi and Krasniqi (2018) emphasised that understanding why sport has been successful in promoting peace in some countries, but less in others, remains an important question for scholars with significant implications for policymakers and donors. Nigeria is a melting pot of diversity and has been plagued by ethnoreligious crisis. It is evident that individuals being used as pawns in crisis are not properly engaged. This presents a unique opportunity for community leaders and sports administrators to fashion out sporting ideas to actively engage the youth prevent further conflict.

Sports for Economic Growth

Sport and active recreation have significant contribution to a country's economy. Sport creates direct economic benefits in the form of jobs, income, tax and revenue. It also benefits the economy indirectly by improving people's health and well-being, which can reduce health-care costs and increase labour productivity. Sport also generates economic benefits by contributing to tourism and entertainment industries (Gebremeden, 2018).

Even if Nigeria has not yet started earning significant revenue from the sport and recreation, the sector has a range of economic benefits as seen from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US and UK. Sport has emerged as an important component of Socio-economic development of nations. Active participation in sports has been found to improve community health and productivity, reduces medical expenses, imbibes discipline in character, generates great leaders, and enhances social cohesion. The execution of a mega sporting event helps in developing infrastructure, generates employment, secure inflow of foreign capital, generates players and athletes, and thus contributes significantly to the economic development of a country. Therefore, it can be said that the impact of sports on economy and society is multi-dimensional (Arpit, 2014).

There are many sports played in Nigeria of which Football is the most famous game. The Sports ministry should be well focused on increasing the sports facilities at the community levels in order to harness more raw talents for sport development and allow communities to have a feel of economic impact of sport at the grassroots. Nigeria should bid for and host several international sporting events with well-developed community sport facilities for communities to have direct impact of sport. Nigeria is rich in giving great athletes to the world. In sports such as Soccer, Basketball, Boxing, Athletics – Sprinting, Paralympics games and Table tennis, developing community sport to enviable

standard will make Nigeria to contribute more. However, Nigeria needs to work more on infrastructure and other Sport facilities at the community level for government achieve more success in sport development.

Sports and Corporate Social Responsibility and investment

The practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has always been integral to sports organisations and is increasing rapidly in popularity. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encourages companies to be more aware of their impact on society. Its focus can be wide ranging, addressing issues such as education, health, gender inequalities and the environment.

Almost all professional organisations and sports teams began to engage in various forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in recent years. This is because CSR can provide financial benefits (Brammer and Millington, 2008; Oliver, 1991), increase the public opinion of an organisation (Godfrey, 2009; Walker and Kent, 2009), increase brand loyalty (Moon, Lee and Oh, 2015), and attract potential talent for a firm (Shamir, 2005).

As sports organisations are so integral to their home communities, teams have quickly adopted CSR participation as a common practice (Babiak, 2010; Zhang and Srurujlal, 2015). Furthermore, with the increase in off-the-field issues in sports, such as domestic violence (Mandell, 2014) and sexual assaults (Cara, 2016), teams can definitely benefit from CSR, as this participation helps to alleviate some of the negative opinions brought about by these activities (Babiak, 2010).

Millions of people consider sports as part of their lives (Godfrey, 2009). Therefore, sports organisations have a responsibility to use their far-reaching capabilities to solve social issues and contribute to the overall good of society (L'Etang, 2006; Walker & Kent, 2009). CSR can be classified as any set of activities that embody the four obligations businesses have to society – economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary, and that through CSR a firm is able to go beyond following laws and creating a profit to benefit stakeholders within and outside of it. Carroll's (1991) work helped to provide reasoning by framing businesses' responsibilities to society in a pyramid, going in this order: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. Accordingly, businesses first and foremost, must fulfil their economic responsibilities by delivering acceptable profits to their shareholders. In addition to upholding all legal requirements, businesses should meet social norms to be ethical, such as treating employees well. Moving beyond their legal and ethical responsibilities, companies should also contribute to society by developing voluntary initiatives, and through these initiatives companies are more proactive to societal needs (Carroll, 1991).

Sports organisations are relatively standardised concerning CSR practices, as they tend to focus most of their time and resources around charity (Inoue, Kent and Lee, 2011), community development initiatives, especially centered around children, such as education programs (Babiak and Wolfe, 2006; Carey Mason and Misener, 2011; Levermore, 2011; Walters and Chadwick, 2009), and health and wellness campaigns (Walters, 2009). These three types of CSR initiatives tend to be the most popular, as sports organisations realise that these initiatives have the strongest relations to their salient stakeholders. This is especially true for community development programs, as sports teams are integral parts of their host cities (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009; Heinze *et al* 2014).

CSR is no doubt one of the multidimensional role of sport in community development. Government, therefore, need to make sport organisations see reasons

why they should concentrate their CSR on these three area mentioned earlier for community development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusively, Sports, no doubt, plays a multidimensional role in community development and these roles revolve around health, education, youth engagement, social integration, economic growth, corporate social responsibilities, peace building and conflict resolution. For government to make the impact of these roles to be more felt in our communities, there is need to make our sport policy to reflect the direction and the kind of impact we want sport to have on those supposed roles.

In respect to the above postulations, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- (1) Government need to promote sport more at the grassroots levels for sport to be able to perform the identified multidimensional roles.
- (2) One of the bane of community sport development is unavailability of community sport infrastructures, or where they are available, they are either dilapidated or must have been converted to other usage. Therefore, government need to fund community sport infrastructures and also make policies that will ensure every community donate lands for community sports or recreation activities.
- (3) Communities should also be encourage to assist the government on grassroots development particularly in the areas of provision of community sport facilities, maintenance, funding and organisation of wholesome sport programmes for community members.
- (4) Trained Coaches and Professional Physical Educators should be employed and deployed to work at community level in order to make sport achieve it cardinal roles at the community levels.
- (5) Sport, from the time immemorial have been found to improve health and fitness which will invariably reduce government funding on curative health practices. Therefore community leaders and every other groups in the community should be made to understand the socio-economic benefits of participation in moderated and regulated physical activities and sports. These can be achieved through enactment of multilevel but comprehensive community sport and recreation education plan for the nation.

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