

EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2009 NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SPORTS SCIENCE, EXERCISE SCIENCE, AND SPORT MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the extent to which the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria is being implemented with regards to sports science and sport medicine. The study was conducted using a sample size of 41 sports officials randomly drawn from Edo State Sports Council and Delta State Sports Council using a systematic random sampling technique. The main instrument used for the study was a self-developed, structured, validated questionnaire and data generated were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Findings of the study revealed that majority of sports stakeholders such as sports administrators and coaches are not aware of the existence of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria. The study further revealed that majority of coaches and administrators in the institutions under study do not employ scientific methods in the conduct of their sports activities.

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government should ensure that any policy formulation process should involve all sports stakeholders at every stages of the policy development, and that attempt should be made henceforth to as much as possible, publicize the design, publication and presentation of all policy mandates as this will help to ensure that all that are concerned with the implementation of the policy are well informed of its existence and its characterization. It was also recommended that sports administrators should endeavor to employ experts in various areas of specialization in sports as this is crucial to the implementation and success of any sports programme.

Keywords: Policy implementation, Nigerian sports policy, sports science, exercise science, sports medicine

INTRODUCTION

Effective implementation of designed policy guidelines is without doubt the key factor that determines the success of any programme under any setting. Notwithstanding what level of human ingenuity and material resources that may have been put into the planning and design of a programme, the extent to which such a programme succeeds is, to a large degree, a function of the extent to which policy mandates guiding the design of such programme are tenaciously implemented and translated into tangible outcomes. Be this as it may, Pfeffer (1992) observed that it is on record that the failure to implement carefully conceived ideas and decisions is increasingly pervasive in both public and private organizations today.

It is worthy to note that Nigeria as a nation has, through the years, been guided by well formulated policies for every of her designed programme with a view to achieving the set goals of such programmes. While this has, for a long time, been the case with most sectors of the Nigerian economy, the Nigerian government's first official policy guideline for the sports subsector was only formulated in 1989 (Aibueku, 2002). The 1989 Nigerian Sports

Development Policy was basically a road map for achieving sports development in the country. While emphasizing the contributions of grassroots institutions to sports development in Nigeria, the policy also succinctly spelt out the functions of the various tiers of government, ministries, agencies and institutions in the developmental drive of the sports subsector of the economy.

Though the 1989 sports development policy of Nigeria can be said to have adequately met some basic requirements put forward by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1989) necessary for effective policy implementation such as being conceptually clear and simple, theoretically sound, and clearly specifies who does what and how, it has, however been argued that the policy document was designed, authored and published without extensive national discourse and consultation of sports stakeholders (Aibueku, 2002). Consequent upon these and other observations with regards to the current state of the sports industry in Nigeria, it was concluded that the 1989 sports development policy of Nigeria was not fully implemented (Aibueku, 2002)

The 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria

In 2009, the Federal Government of Nigeria released the 2009 National Sports Policy. This was the government's second official policy guideline on the development of the sports subsector in Nigeria. The policy document, designed in five chapters, contains the following sections: general introduction; philosophy, vision, mission, values and objectives of the sports policy; obligations of the three tiers of government in sports; major elements of the policy; and policy review process.

While the foregoing is a broad outline of the policy format, the "major elements" as contained in the policy document are:

- a. Administration and management.
- b. Finance/sponsorship.
- c. Training and development of technical personnel.
- d. Facilities.
- e. Athlete identification and development.
- f. Sport in education.
- g. Sport science and sport medicine.
- h. Incentives awards and sanctions.
- i. Sport, culture and tourism.
- j. Sport and the physically challenged.
- k. Sport and Information and National orientation.
- l. Sport and International image.
- m. Sport and environment.
- n. Sport and security (p.7).

The 2009 national sports policy which came into existence twenty years after the 1989 version attempted a review of the 1989 policy document by addressing observed shortcomings in the former document and thus attempting to improve on it. The seventh major element of the policy document addressed sport science and sport medicine vis-à-vis the scientific and medical dimensions of sports and physical activities.

Sport and Exercise Science and Sport Medicine

Sports science and sport medicine in the context of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigerian, include exercise physiology, biomechanics, sports nutrition, sports psychology, clinical sport medicine, sport physiotherapy and rehabilitation. In the opinion of Bucher and Wuest (2003), while sports are highly organized, competitive physical activities governed by rules, exercise science is the scientific analysis of exercise or more inclusively, physical activities, using scientific methods and theories from biology, biochemistry, physics, and psychology. In the light of the foregoing, sports and exercise science involve the scientific analysis of movement activities with a view to achieving efficiency in movement and peak performance in sports.

For the purpose of achieving its set objectives with respect to sport science and sport medicine, the 2009 National Sport Policy of Nigerian proposed that the National Sports Commission shall:

- i. Integrate a scientific approach to the training and preparation of athletes for participation in competitive sports.
- ii. Apply the principle of sports science and sports medicine in developing potentials of athletes for high performances in major competitive sports.
- iii. Put in place a continuous medical monitoring programme of athletes' health in and out of competitions especially with respect to injury prevention and rehabilitation.
- iv. Give consideration to environmental factors such as temperature and altitude in the selection of training and camping sites for national teams.
- v. Encourage use of sports Psychologists and Nutritionists to ensure optimal performance of athletes.
- vi. Conduct fitness assessment as means of determining and monitoring fitness levels of athletes.
- vii. Institute a national pre-participation medical screening programme for athletes with a view to identifying factors that may preclude participation
- viii. Establish a well-equipped National Sports Medicine and Sports Science Centre to achieve the objective of providing quality sports medicine care.
- ix. Seek to develop a National Anti-Doping policy that shall effectively confront the challenges of doping and drug use in sport in compliance with the objectives of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Olympic Committee (p. 11).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is no gainsaying that the 2009 National Sport Policy of Nigerian is conceptually clear and theoretically sound, addressing vital issues that are germane to sports development in Nigeria. The noble ideals upon which the policy mandate is based are such that would ordinarily elicit a quick and positive response from any well-meaning government, organization and individuals. However, two years after the enactment of this policy, it can be observed that the sports subsector is still bedeviled with challenges bordering on scientific analysis of sports and physical activities. This situation thus calls to question the extent to which the 2009 national sports policy of Nigeria is being implemented with regards to sports science and sport medicine, hence this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to provide a focus for this study, the following research questions are raised:

1. Are sports stakeholders aware of the existence of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?
2. Are sports stakeholders aware of the element of sports science and sport medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?
3. Is the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria being implemented with regards to sports science and sport medicine?

SCOPE OF STUDY

The focus of this study is on implementation of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria with regards to sports science and sport medicine. The extent to which other elements contained in the policy document are implemented is not captured in this study. Furthermore, the study is geographically confined to Edo and Delta States of Nigeria, thus subjects selected for the study were drawn only from these two states.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

Samples for the study are selected from two out of the 36 states in Nigeria, and data used for the study represents the opinions of respondents selected from these two states. Consequent upon this, the extent to which results from this study can be generalized is limited.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Subjects

The study was conducted using a sample size of 41 sports officials randomly drawn from Edo State Sports Council and Delta State Sports Council using a systematic random sampling technique. This involved selecting 17 sports officials from Delta State Sports Council and 24 sports officials from Edo State Sports Council.

Procedure

Edo State Sports Council and Delta State Sports Council are the government bodies responsible for regulating sports in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. In each of these institutions, the staff register was used to select five administrative staff using the first administrative staff on the list and every other staff on the list in a hierarchical order until a total of five administrative staff is selected. Furthermore, the coach in charge of each of the competitive sports in each of the institutions was selected for the study. Thus from Edo State Sports Council, 24 sports officials were selected while 17 sports officials were selected from Delta State Sports Council.

Research Instruments

The main instrument used to generate data for the study was a self-developed, structured, validated questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of two sections; A and B. The first section labeled as section A contained items designed to elicit demographic information from the respondents. The second section labeled as section B contained 15 items designed in a modified Likert Scale format with response options in three scales viz: Yes, Undecided, and No.

Statistical Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the application of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

Results obtained are presented in tables 1-3.

Research Question 1

Are sports stakeholders aware of the existence of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?

Table 1. The 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria

Sr. No.	Items	Responses							
		Yes	%	U	%	No	%	Total	%
1	Are you aware of the existence of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?	16	39	0	0	25	61	41	100
2	Have you seen a copy of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?	11	26.8	0	0	30	73.2	41	100
3	Do you own a copy of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?	11	26.8	0	0	30	73.2	41	100
4	Have you studied the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?	11	26.8	0	0	30	73.2	41	100

From table 1, it is evident that majority of the respondents are not even aware of the existence of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria. This is demonstrated by the high percentage score (61%) of those who responded in the negative to the question on whether they are aware that there is a 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria. In the same vein, majority of the respondents have neither seen, read, nor own a copy of the policy document. This is also demonstrated in the table where 73.2%, 73.2%, and 73.2% of the respondents respectively responded negatively to items 2, 3, and 4 in the questionnaire.

Research Question 2

Are sports stakeholders aware of the element of sports science and sport medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?

Table 2. Element of sports science and sport medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria

Sr. No.	Items	Responses							
		Yes	%	U	%	No	%	Total	%
5	Have you studied the fourth chapter of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria?	09	22	0	0	32	78	41	100
6	Have you studied subsection 4.7 of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria that contains sports science and sport medicine?	09	22	0	0	32	78	41	100
7	Do you agree with the content of the above subsection?	09	22	0	0	32	78	41	100
8	Do you think the implementation of subsection 4.7 is worthwhile and should be vigorously pursued?	09	22	0	0	32	78	41	100

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents are not aware of the element of sports science and sport medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria. This can be observed in the table where in response to questions 5, 6, 7, and 8, 78% respectively responded in the negative.

Research Question 3

Is the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria being implemented with regards to sports science and sport medicine?

Table 3. Implementation of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria

Sr. No.	Items	Responses							
		Yes	%	U	%	No	%	Total	%
9	Do you regularly conduct fitness assessment for determining and monitoring the fitness level of your athletes?	06	14.6	09	22	26	63.4	41	100
10	Do you have qualified sports psychologists among your officials who help to monitor psychological status of your athletes?	09	21.9	11	26.8	21	51.3	41	100
11	Do you have qualified sports nutritionists among your officials who help to monitor nutritional status of your athletes?	09	21.9	11	26.8	21	51.3	41	100
12	When selecting training and camping site for athletes, do you give considerations to environmental factors such as temperature and altitude?	12	29.3	13	31.7	16	39	41	100
13	Do you have in place, a continuous medical monitoring programme for athletes' health in and out of competition season?	11	26.9	14	34.1	16	39	41	100
14	Do you conduct a pre-participation medical screening programme for athletes with a view to identifying factors that may preclude participation?	06	14.6	16	39	19	46.4	41	100
15	Do you perform screening for doping and drug use among athletes before and during competition?	06	14.6	14	34.1	21	51.3	41	100
16	Do you apply scientific principles in developing potential athletes for high performance in major competitive sports?	09	21.9	22	53.7	10	24.4	41	100

Table 3 which shows the analysis of items on the extent of implementation of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria with regards to sports science and sport medicine, has demonstrated that what obtains among coaches and sports administrators in the course of handling their athletes is not fully in line with the specifications of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria. The analysis shows that only 14.6% of the total respondents regularly conduct fitness assessment for determining and monitoring the fitness level of their athletes. In the same vein, out of a total of 41 respondents, only 21.9% respectively agreed that they

have qualified sports psychologists and qualified sports nutritionists among their officials who help to monitor psychological and nutritional status of their athletes. Furthermore, in response to the question on whether considerations is given to environmental factors such as temperature and altitude when selecting training and camping site for athletes, only 29.3% of the 41 respondents answered in the positive. While responding to the question on whether they have in place, a continuous medical monitoring programme for athletes' health in and out of competition season, only 26.9% of the 41 respondents agreed. While responding to items 13 and 14 on the questionnaire which are on the conduct a pre-participation medical screening programme for athletes with a view to identifying factors that may preclude participation and the performance of screening for doping and drug use among athletes before and during competition, only 14.6% of the 41 respondents respectively responded in the positive. Finally, in response to the question of applying scientific principles in developing potential athletes for high performance in major competitive sports, only 21.9% of the total 41 respondents answered affirmatively.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has helped clarify basic issues concerning the extent to which the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigerian is being implemented with regards to sports science and sports medicine.

Evident from the findings of the study is the fact that majority of sports stakeholders such as sports administrators and coaches are not even aware of the existence of the policy document. This position points to the fact that there was no extensive consultation of sports stakeholders in Nigeria during the design, publication and presentation of the policy, thus eliminating the vital inputs of these stakeholders who are expected to be key actors in the implementation process of the policy. Suffice to say that the first Sports Development Policy of Nigeria equally shared this fate (Aibueku, 2002).

The study further revealed that the few sports personnel who have actually had access to the policy document have studied it and fully supports the mandates contained therein.

Regarding the subsection that dealt on elements of sports science and sport medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria, the few sports personnel who have had access to, and studied the document, particularly the concerned subsection, agree that the implementation of the elements in this section should be vigorously pursued.

While it appeared to be a general consensus among the few sports personnel who have studied the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria that the policy mandate regarding sports science and sport medicine is quite laudable, the extent to which the dictates of this policy with regards to these elements of sports science and sport medicine are being implemented is, however, not encouraging. The study revealed that majority of coaches and administrators in the institutions under study do not conduct fitness assessment for determining and monitoring the fitness level of their athletes; they do not have qualified sports psychologists and nutritionists among their officials who help to monitor psychological and nutritional status of their athletes; they do not give considerations to environmental factors such as temperature and altitude when selecting training and camping site for athletes; they do not have in place, a continuous medical monitoring programme for athletes' health in and out of competition season; they do not conduct a pre-participation medical screening programme for athletes with a view to identifying factors that may preclude participation; they do not perform screening for doping and drug use among athletes before and during competition and; they do not apply scientific principles in developing potential athletes for high performance in major competitive sports.

The import of the above position is none implementation of the 2009 National Sports Policy of Nigeria with regards to sports science and sports medicine. Suffice to say that this is, however, not surprising as it is on record that majority of sports and fitness facilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria conduct their operations without academically qualified personnel and without taking into cognizance, basic scientific principles that are needed for peak performance and safety (Aibueku & Ogbouma, 2011; Ogbouma & Agwibike, 2011).

The foregoing position is not encouraging considering that the first sports policy in Nigeria: the 1989 Sports Development Policy of Nigeria, also suffered similar setback (Aibueku, 2002), thus leading to a total waste of time, effort and resources in the design, publication and presentation of the policy document. These observations have further lent credence to Pfeffer's (1992) assertion that "the failure to implement carefully conceived ideas and decisions is increasingly pervasive in both public and private organizations today".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from the results of this study that the sports institutions responsible for regulating sports in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria have failed in the implementation of elements of sports science and sports medicine in the 2009 National Sports Policy. The reason for this failure, as demonstrated in the study, can be attributed mainly to lack of knowledge of the existence of the 2009 sports policy document as claimed by majority of the subjects. However, best practice in sports, which normally should be a guiding principle among all sports personnel, demands that sports personnel employ every scientific avenue for achieving set goals without having to wait for the prompting of any policy guidelines.

In the light of the foregoing and in order to address the incidence of poor implementation of the 2009 National Sports Policy, the following recommendations are considered apt:

Given the relevance of sports stakeholders to the successful implementation of any sports policy, government should ensure that any policy formulation process should involve all sports stakeholders at every stages of such policy development.

Attempt should be made henceforth to as much as possible, publicize the design, publication and presentation of all policy mandates as this will help to ensure that all that are concerned with the implementation of the policy are well informed of its existence and its characterization.

Sports administrators should as a matter of necessity endeavor to employ experts in various areas of specialization in sports as their inputs can be invaluable to the entire success of the sports programme.

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