

SPORTS EMPOWERMENT OF THE YOUTHS TO ACCOMPLISH VISION 2020

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Abstract

Vision 2020 being an Innovation in our educational system cannot be feasible without active involvement of the youths. This paper therefore examined the youths, sports empowerment as one of the organizational planning strategies set to realize the vision 2020 in educational sector through Physical Education. It highlighted the theories of empowerment, youth sports character development and youth policy on empowerment participation and rights. It also presented the challenges facing the youths in sports. It concluded with recommendations which includes the integration and implementation of all the empowerment theories in our teaching programs at all levels of education to give the youths opportunities to act in the world around them, provision, supervision and maintenance of sports facilities, playground and recreational grounds by the federal, state and local government, review of the existing curriculum through reliable research for a better youthful society.

Introduction

The youths are the future nation of tomorrow. They are also the life wire of the nation. It is a remarkable fact for any nation to change for good; it has to do with a change that involves the youth as a whole. Vision 2020 is an innovation in our educational system. The philosophy behind the vision is that Nigeria will be ranked among the first twenty (20) nations of the world in both economy and social life (Musa Dogo, 2009). Education is regarded as a paramount means for achieving national development to both youths and the state at large. To realize the vision, the nation needs strong workable strategies of development which need to be formulated with appropriate policies in every sector of the economy and education inclusive. Nigeria currently in the sporting sector has not met the target. The country emerging 61st position in the 2008 Olympic Games held in Beijing China, in the overall world medial table has not been fairing well at all narrated Musa Dogo, 2009. Physical Education can help to solve some of the problems of modern youths by involving them in purposeful physical pursuits like sports and recreations. And playing regularly for a football, volleyball, basketball and the likes can give a young person a sense of purpose in the way in which the youth spends his leisure time. When these sports and recreational activities were properly formed, organized, guided and supervised by the responsible adults, they can help to prevent anti-social behaviors in youths for a better society.

Concepts of Youth and Empowerment

Youth is defined by Webster's New World Dictionary as, "The time of life when one is young; especially; (a) the period between childhoods and maturity and (b) the early period of existence, growth, or development. Around the world the terms "youth", adolescent, teenager" and "young person" are interchanged often meaning the same thing, occasionally differentiated. Youth generally refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood, but rather, somewhere in between. Konopka (1973) noted that youth is an alternative word to the scientifically oriented adolescent and the common terms of teen and teenager. Another common title for youth is young person or young people. Many authors give various age limits of the youth but all falling between the ages of 15 and 29 years inclusive.

Robbins, Chatterjee and Canada (1998) viewed empowerment as a process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals.

Vavrus and Fletcher (2006) define youth empowerment as an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and power to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults. Sazama and Young (2006) viewed youth empowerment as often addressed as a gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement and democracy building. Many local, state, provincial, regional, national and international government agencies and nonprofit community based organizations provide programs that centered on youth empowerment. Fletcher (2005) opined that youth empowerment occurs in homes, at schools, through youth organizations, government policy-making and community organizing campaigns. Major structural activities where youth empowerment happens throughout the society include community decision-making, organizational planning, and education reform.

Theories of Empowerment

Since empowerment is a process of gaining power and access to resources by the individuals to achieve their highest personal goals according to Robbins, Chatterjee and Canada (1998). Several empowerment theories have been formulated to explain different levels of developing personal skills. The following three empowerment theories will be discussed in this paper.

a. Intrapersonal Theory

Lee (2001) reported that intrapersonal theory of empowerment is a micro level of theory of empowerment, which is a foundation level for building upon the other levels. Bush and Valentine (2000) supported the view that intrapersonal theory develops skills like strengths, validation and equality. They further explained that it builds self-efficacy, personal consciousness, decreasing self-blame and assuming personality responsibility.

b. Interpersonal theory

Ogu, Agbanusi, and Umeasiegbu (2008) narrated that performance in sports based on personality profile is as old as Plato and Socrates. The Greek coaches classified their Olympic athletes as bear athlete (endurance) lion athletes (strength) eagle athletes (speech and fast). Interpersonal theory is a Mezzo otherwise moderate or quite theory according to Lee (2000). He is of the opinion that the empowered person is allowed to work with others on a broader level on a changing oppression. The group realizes that they are not alone. They work as a group with shared feelings, experiences and to see commonality between the group members.

c. Roles and strategies theory

This is the last level of theories of empowerment. It covers four categories namely resources consultant role, sensitizer role, teachers trainer role and cooperator role (Bush and Valentine (2000), Lee, (2001), Robbins, Chatterjee and Canda (1998).

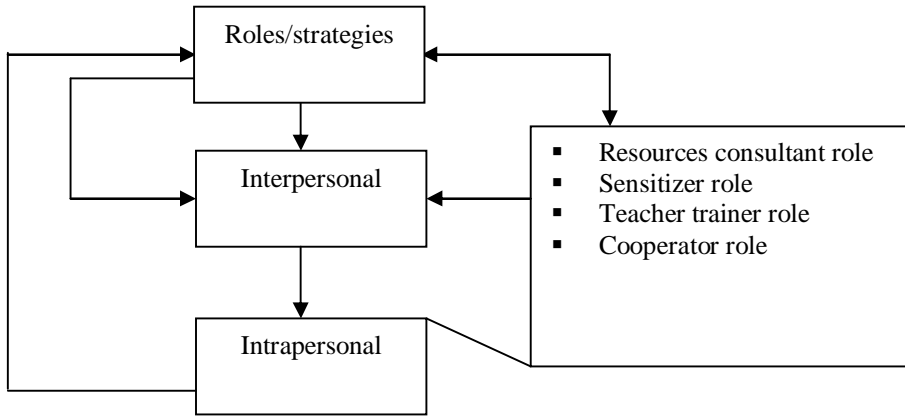
i. Resource consultant role (Catalyzing): It links youths to resources so that it enhances their self-esteem and problem solving skills. It also links them to work towards achieving their own independence and control over their lives.

ii. Sensitizer role (Enabling): Money (2008) opined that an athlete exhibit different, distinct and unique characteristics from another athlete thus, to shape the attitude of the athletes towards positive orientation to sports involvement and performance. Sensitizer role helps the youth to gain the knowledge necessary to take control of their own lives. Lee (2000) further explained that the empowered person recognizes and identifies their own strengths and strengths of others.

iii. Teacher trainer role (Priming): It places the social workers as manager of the learning process which aimed at helping the youths to find solutions for their problems. A coach who acts as a teacher can use this theory to obtain an optimal performance in sport since it is in line with Ogu, Agbanusi and Umeasiegbu (2008) that arousal control, adjustment and intervention strategies for uttering existing levels of anxiety and arousal by the youths in sports.

iv. Cooperator Role (Linking): Lee (2001) characterized this theory as linking theory. It connects the empowered person to others who share common histories, issues and goals e.g. participation in Olympic Games. It gives the youth the ability to act and determine what to achieve by themselves Vavrus and Fletcher (2006).

Fig 1: A schematic Diagram showing the relationships among the empowerment theories.



The diagram explains schematically that the empowerment theories ultimately shower in increased in roles and strategies of youth empowerment. Lee (2001) explains that resource consultant role links the youths to resources so that it enhances their self esteem and problem solving skills. It also helps the empowered person to recognize and identifies their own strengths and the strengths of others. Most advanced countries have that discovered that the secret of national economic growth is the ability to empower the youths.

It is all about the people, programs and institutions involved in the process of making the young people to gain the ability, authority and power to make decisions and implement changes in their lives. For Physical Education in Nigeria and youth in sports to compete with their counterparts at Olympic Games, these theories have to be integrated and implemented in our teaching programs.

Youths Character Development in Sports

Different sports and leisure activities around can allow individuals especially the youths to manage their free time without constraints. It also develops the following character traits according to Laoye and Ackland (1981).

Team-spirit: This is an aspect of co-operation. Team-spirit means working together for a common end, such as scoring a goal in football. It teaches the youths to put the interest of the group before one's personal interest. Most competitive games promote team-spirit, such as relay races, as well as major team games like soccer, handball, basketball to invention but a few.

Leadership: The essential test of a good leader is the morale of the group he leads. A child at birth may have the potential to become a successful leader, but the ability to lead has to be learned. Leaders are made, not born. All youths

should be given the opportunity to act as a leader in different situations in Physical Education and those youths who are destined to become leaders in later life will be given the opportunity to acquire the basic qualities of leadership.

Respect for authority: As there are leaders, so there must be followers. The ability to accept and respect the authority of a leader is a basic factor in the stability of any group, providing the authority is legitimate. Group activities and games help the youths to learn to appreciate the need for order and control under the direction of a leader. It is as important as learning how to act as a leaders.

Loyalty: This means being faithful to other people, so that they will know that you can be trusted. A loyal person will not speak badly of his friends or team mates behind their backs. Taking part in team games helps to promote loyalty, not only to the team, but to the school and the community as well.

Fair play: This means not taking advantage over other people, by such methods as cheating or by unnecessarily rough play. It should not be necessary for the referee or umpire to keep an eye on every thing that is going on in games. The youths have to learn they once the rules have been agreed they apply to every one alike, irrespective of position or status.

Impartiality: Judges referees and umpire should all possess the quality of impartiality. It means being able to pass judgment without favour to either side. The youths can learn how to act with impartiality by being placed in situations in which they have to apply the rule, such as being asked to referee a game of volleyball.

Co-operation: Group work plays an important part in the teaching of physical education. When the youths work together in a group they have to learn how to operate successfully with each other. More than any other subject, Physical Education provides a wide range of group activities, through which the teacher is able to promote a co-operative spirit among his students e.g. swimming and gymnastics, the students act as supporters for one another.

Selflessness: It follows that team spirit and selflessness go together. It is the opposite of selfishness. A selfless person is considerate to other people and is able to share and co-operate with team-mates. He will be prepared to listen to what other people have to say before putting forward his own point of view.

Sportsmanship: The term sportsmanship means something important and valuable, both for the individual and the group. A good sportsman is a person who is honest, loyal, straight t-forward and reliable. He will be a respected member of the community with a sting regard for the needs and interest of others. It is through active participation in games and sports, that quality of good sportsmanship can be developed and fostered in individuals.

Forbearance: Forbearance enables the individual to endure, and overcome, the strains and tensions of life. In Physical Education it can be fostered by

encouraging the youths to train and practice hard even though they might feel like giving up. The champion athlete has to train for many hours at a time, in order to improve his performance and to prepare himself for competitions.

Youths Policy on Empowerment Participation and Rights

The Nigerian governments should include youth representatives, selected by youth in an open and democratic manner, in their delegations to Nigerian General Assembly and all other intergovernmental in order to meet the challenges of young people.

Nigerian governments should implement legislation to protect human rights, as they relate to youth, including protecting rights to participation in decision-making, access to quality education fostering responsible citizenship, and access to human rights education. Financial support, training and facilities need to be provided at a local, national and international level in order to ensure young people active participation in decision-making and development activities. The government should design and implement programs that can build the institutional capacity of youth organizations. The government should support the creation of independent and democratic local and national youth councils, as well as regional platforms where they do not exist. (Sazama & Young, 2006, Gutierrez, Parsons & Cox, 1998).

Challenges Facing Physical Education in Nigeria

For Physical Education in Nigeria and youth in sports to compete with their world counterparts at Olympics Games and ranked among first twenty (20) nations of the world, the following challenges must be addressed.

- Inadequate instructional/infrastructural requirement
- Poor funding of sports
- Inadequate sports programs
- Poor research and Planning
- Poor implementation of sports policy
- Poor scouting and identification of talents

Inadequate Instructional/Infrastructural Sport Requirement

The factor of adequate sports facilities and equipment is an important variable among the variable that facilitate the attainment of outstanding sports performances. The dearth in the provision of adequate, appropriate and timely instructional or sports requirements in all the three tiers of governments (Federal, State and Local Government) are a big problem to youth sport empowerment in Nigeria. Some of these facilities at our universities of higher learning are sub-standard and the standard ones after the hosting major games like Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA), Nigerian Polytechnic Games Association (NIPOGA) waste in a state of disrepair. Sadly, for the country Musa Dogo (2009) noted that the available sports facilities at our Stadium in Lagos,

Ibadan, University of Port-Harcourt, University of Maduguri and others have been left to waste in a state of disrepair.

Poor Funding of Sports

The Federal and State government fail to accept primary responsibility of funding of sports for youth development in Nigeria. And responsibilities had not been discharged through regular and adequate budgetary allocations to the sector and through the mobilization of additional resources in the private sector of youth sports empowerment programs.

Inadequate Sports Programs

The factor of adequate and improved sports programs is one of the problems facing youth sports empowerment in Nigeria. Both teaching and training programs are necessary to improve youth sports skills and provide ample opportunities for the youth to improve their level of aspirations. The teaching programs lack integration and implementation of theories of empowerment and when the training programs too are not motivational, supportive, and challenging with opportunities to express oneself, lack of interest in participation sets in.

Poor Research and Planning

The Physical Educational teachers depend largely on research for their academic growth. The effective planning and implementation of youth sports empowerment programmed depend largely on research and projects based on the availability of reliable and valid data. Nigerians are yet to plan and conduct reliable research on youth sports issues and publishing report and proceedings resulting from such researches and seminars. And Local utilization of research products in Nigeria is unpopular hence most research appear unmotivated for further research.

Poor Implementation of Sports Policy

There is a lot of challenges facing sports policy in Nigeria, the federal, state and local governments has ignored out-rightly to adopt the implementation strategies of the National sports policies of Nigeria. Financial support, training and facilities need to be providing at all levels in order to ensure young peoples, active participation in decision-making and sports development programs.

Poor Scouting and Identification of Talents

The step in the process of scouting and identification of talents is the detection of talent in students not yet involved in regular training. University setting is the last level of student participation in intramural or extramural ends and the maturity level begins. Sadly among the slogan of “catch them young” have become mere passwords as far as scouting for talents is concerned in Nigeria. This is because basic pre-requisites like coaches, training facilities and

comprehensive training programmes which are needed to groom these young talents to maturity are lacking. The next option is to hire non-bonafide students in order to win at all cost.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that for Vision 2020 to be feasible in Nigeria, the youth must be actively involved and participate in sports. They are the life-wire of the nation. Since education is regarded as a vital means of achieving national development. Therefore the youths through education should be giving an opportunity to develop skills for a better youthful society. With the above recommendations, Nigeria will be ranked among the first twenty (20) nations of the world soonest.

Recommendations

The Federal, State and Local Governments should be responsible for the provision and constructions of

- i. Equipment at affordable price for mass participation through duty-free importation
- ii. Standard sports facilities which must conform with international specifications shall be provided at various levels
- iii. The private sector must complement the efforts of the governments in erecting sporting facilities of their choice in any part of the country, such facilities may be named after the donor.
- iv. The Federal, State and Local Government should maintain the sporting facilities, playgrounds, recreation ground and stadium while those at Universities should be maintained by the Physical Education experts.

The Federal and State governments should accept and perform their primary responsibility of funding sports for youth development in Nigeria.

Provision of funds by the University authority to the sports council is a great importance to produce elite athletes. Therefore, University management should help support sports through the Sports Council, Registry, Bursary and Vice-Chancellor office.

Sports levy paid by the students should be released to the Sports Council as at when due and the University should provide a matching grant.

All levels of educational system should integrate and implement all the empowerment theories in our teaching programs to give the youth opportunities to act in the world around them.

The people, programs and institutions who work with youth should consider these practices:

- **Supports:** The supports can take many different forms, but they must be affirming, respectful and ongoing. A coach should make sports programs motivational, emotional and strategic for the youth to succeed in life.

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- Opportunities: Chances, Opportunities should be given to the youths to act in the world around them by to explore, express and to test ideas and behaviors e.g. participation in Olympic Games.
- Quality services: the services in such areas as education, health, employment should provide respect, with high standards and expectations, guidance and affirmation to young people.

Nigerian should conduct reliable research more on sports youth issues in the following areas:

- i. Review of the existing curriculum
- ii. Supervision and maintenance of sports facilities
- iii. Programs in sports
- iv. Funding of sport as related to source, strategies and training that support both the programming and structural components.

The management of inventions will be crystallized when research products are being utilized locally and research works adequately remunerated and honored. A process should be put in place to integrate the utilization of research product which could come up through research fans. The Federal government should ensure that all the sports policy is fully implemented e.g. provision of sports facilities and funding of sports to mention but a few.

In spite of some universities setting aside Wednesday afternoon free for participation in sports, some lecturers continue to schedule lectures for the period. The University Management should note and appeal to lectures to support university policy on sports.

Basic Physical Education courses should be introduced in the University as General Studies (GS) to help involve every student in sport participation which also will help a coach to scout for young talents in the University.

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