

Sports Coaches Managerial Competences: A Major Factor for Success in Inter-University Games

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Abstract

This paper reviewed the coaching competences of sports coaches engaged in Universities in Nigeria with special interest in Universities in Edo state on how they can achieve success in the sports performance outcome of student-athletes in these universities. Also, the role of sports coaches, sports coaches' coaching competences as well as student-athletes sports participation in universities in Nigeria were reviewed and discussed. Thereafter, the recommendations were that when there is effective sports administration, sports administrators would map out activities to be performed by coaches. They will put machineries together to get the activities done and hire qualified, competent and capable coaches to carry out the activities. In doing these, tasks will be distributed accordingly with corresponding authority. There will be harmonization of the activities of all the coaches and departments and ways to bring about and expand revenue for the success of the organization will be fashioned out. When all these are put in place, effective sports administration in the Universities would naturally bring about improvement and success in university sports.

Keywords: Sports coaches, Managerial competences, Inter-university Games, Sport administration

Introduction

Participation in sports has several benefits that have far reaching implications (physical, mental and social) on the wellbeing of athletes. Beyond these benefits, sports industry is an economically viable enterprise with financial benefits for stakeholders involved. This assertion is discernable from the robust remunerations for athletes, amount of money invested in sports and the extensive global markets for the purchase and sales of sports goods. This turn of events in the global sports industry has led to wide and growing expectations for consistent improvements in the sports performance of athletes. In most sporting events, athlete's performance is determined by the athlete's technical, tactical, physiological, and psychological/sociological characteristics (Bangsbo, 2015). Furthermore, the sports performance of athletes can also be affected by other

external factors like coaching, since it involves motivating, instructing, supporting, and enabling athletes to fulfill their fullest potential (Kim & Cruz, 2016).

Bush and Silk (2010) argued that coaching is a complex endeavor that functions beyond directing practice and training. Coaches' roles expand and involve taking responsibility for players outside the practice/competition environment as well as being aware of the overall social and psychosocial well-being and development of athletes. A coach can be described as the person who will help the athletes to elevate their performances to the highest level that the athletes can get. In fact, coaches play a vital role in the development and improvement of athletic skills that are necessary for winning a competition. Thus, exhibiting certain coaching competences must be of paramount importance since these can have a great impact on athletes' performance. Expected improvements from athletes' performances would be difficult to achieve without an effective and efficient coaching competence in managing the pre-competitive and competitive stages of athletes. Today's sports environment, confronts sports coaches with new experiences and challenges and it is getting more dynamic each passing day. New managerial need surfaces due to global competition and the emerging expectations of the societies. Coaches need competences to perform their functions and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

In view of these, it is expected that sports coaches would help in managing athletes to overcome sports competitive challenges when preparing for major competitions in order to perform well and achieve success. Competence is what makes the difference between professionals and non-professionals in any field of endeavor (Keller & Campbell as cited in Zamani, 2008). Mgbor (2002) defined competence as skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviours demonstrated by a person who shows that he/she has been trained and are capable of certain responsibilities. Shone and Parry (2004) defined competence as the combination of skills, knowledge and required attitudes to perform a role effectively. It is also seen as the characteristic that is associated with superior or effective performance. Sports coaches need to know that, in each job specification, ability is required. As such, it is expedient that, for there to be proper administration in terms of having the right competences to ensure sports performance success, sports organizations need competent and effective coaches. Therefore, competence implies the ability of sports coaches to carry out task effectively and successfully. The competence variables are skill competence, adaptability, and knowledge, competence in foresight, creativity and competence in

communication. This study review is concerned with establishing that sports coaches in Nigeria universities bring to the fore their managerial competences in order to achieve success in the sports performance of student-athletes in inter-university sports competitions.

Sports coaches' skill competence according to Keller (2013), include people skill, team work, decision making skill and organizational skills. Sports coaches work endlessly with various individuals (including athletes, agents, scouts, sports administrators, media and medical professionals) from diverse backgrounds and in a variety of settings – including professional and casual settings. For this reason, sports coaches must be able to move seamlessly from one group of people to the next and feel comfortable no matter what the setting is whether in one-on-one situations or in a mixed group of people. For the most part, sports are about teamwork at every level of the game and the aim of sports coaches is to help individuals play as a team. Sports coaches themselves work as part of a team with the help of sports administrators, trainers and sponsors, towards getting the best for and out of an athlete through good leadership and decision making skills. Sports coaches need to be able to take tough decisions and stick to them, especially in high-visibility positions. Decisions often need to be made quickly in this field. Thus, sports coaches need to be confident in their ability to weigh the pros and cons in a timely and organized manner. For sports coaches, organizational skills relevant to career success include the ability to multi-task, keep records, manage a calendar and plan programmes out in advance. An ability to make the most effective use of one's time is an essential skill for sports coaches, because their time is in high demand. Consequent upon the foregoing, it is accurate to imply that sports coaches' skill competence is vital to student-athletes' sports performance.

Another variable of competence is adaptability. This refers to the ability of a sports coach to change proposed actions, course or approach to carrying out tasks in order to suit a new situation. It is the sports coach's ability to switch in between circumstances when they arise. Moreover, adaptability refers to the ability to change and remain flexible when encountering new circumstances. For example, in the work environment, it includes change in environments, having to deal with policies and adjusting to a new team. Adaptability is important and shows that a sports coach can cope with unforeseen circumstances. Adaptability can be a personal characteristic or acquired through learning thus allowing adjustment to changes in work place environment. This competence variable allows one to take on new responsibilities without undue increased

adjustment to time and hence one reacts quickly to changing strategies or ideas. Most sports organizations for instance, encounter situations that are unpredictable hence, employers search for competent candidates that are able to cope or facilitate changes easily. Sports coaches must be willing to learn new skills that exceed expectations. They should demonstrate the ability to embrace change and face challenges with a positive mindset and solve issues with a solution-oriented approach and knowledgeably too.

Knowledge competence is the process of systematically managing individuals, groups and organization. Organizations are engaging with knowledge management projects and strategies to harvest knowledge in order to stay competitive and be innovative. The sports coaches' profession is ever-changing and at each level of competition, needs to know more than just the norm in order to be successful. As a coach, the priority should be to develop the athletes and help them to achieve their goals. Sports coaches should acquire a working knowledge of all areas affiliated with sports performance success. Ideally, the disciplines of sports administration, sports medicine, strength and conditioning and of course, sports psychology can help a sports coach to physically and mentally train athletes. It is highly imperative that the sports coach have knowledge in these aforementioned disciplines in order to coach the athletes about skill development and thereby prepare them for excellent performance. Therefore, for any person seeking to become a successful coach or administrator in any sports institution, such individual should be knowledgeable about the basic theories, procedures and techniques of administration. Knowledge competence involves the application of different techniques to achieve results notwithstanding the circumstances surrounding the given situation, and also involve the ability to anticipate or predict such situation.

Foresight is another competence variable involving multiple stakeholders creating value through providing access to critical resources ahead of competition, preparing the organization to steer proactively towards a desired future in order to achieve success (Baskarada, Shrimpton, Ng, Cox & Sarita, 2016). It enhances sports organization's ability to understand the emerging risks opportunities, motivations, resources, evolution, and causalities that are linked to alternative decisions. It is the ability of the sports coaches to be proactive enough to predict the future and prepare against unfavorable result. This action would enable the sports organization to make better informed and prepared decisions on issues concerned with its overall strategic plans and the means of achieving its long-term objectives (Kuosa, 2016). Summarily, foresight as a competence

variable is the ability of the sports coach to predict future trends and other important developments in the sports environment successfully and creatively.

Creativity is viewed as some sort of rare and spontaneous event which only few people are capable of. In contrast, others may view creativity not necessarily as some kind of unexplainable event or a mysterious phenomenon, but rather as a systematic process whereby opportunities for change and new ideas are sought out based upon foresight (Cabra, 2010). It is an individual's ability to avoid normal routines and traditional methods of thinking with new or uncommon original production that can be implemented and achieved. Creativity in sports coaching is the ability of the sports coach to achieve the objectives and results for the benefit of the beneficiaries of sports organizations. This can be achieved by the intelligent utilization of available resources to overcome the problems and obstacles encountered by the sports coach. Resources in this regard refer to both financial and human resources. There is an increasing need for research on the components of the creative trend in sports management at the local or organizational level. Social and cultural changes are becoming more pressing today than at any other time before now perhaps because, the world today is experiencing rapid growth and increasing changes. This is why organizations need creativity to deal with these rapidly changing conditions. Creativity provides the sports coach the opportunity to manage sports organizations in a creative manner. The preparation of human resources in the sports environment and the enablement to play their role as a tool of change makes creativity a strategic competency requirement.

Utilizing human resources in any organization employs the competence variable of communication as a vital tool of management. Communication is a two-way street. Sports coaches need to be able to talk to their athletes and team and also be able to listen to their needs. Sports coaches walk a fine line between boss and friend. Each coach has to decide how stern or lax an approach they want to take with athletes will be. Regardless of the method, sports coaches must be able to explain decisions and strategies, interact with a myriad of sports professionals, and actively listen to the needs of their organization. Sports coaches should be able to communicate through writing, negotiating written contracts, have a keen eye and possess the ability to understand verbose legal document (Nakpodia, 2011). In the university settings for instance, efficient management of sports programmes will rely essentially on cooperative, dedicated and competent personnel. It could be asserted therefore that, the success or otherwise of any unit,

department or organization in the university especially in the sports department, depends largely on the quality of the staff to handle its operation. Students' participation in sports can neither be ignored nor over-emphasized. In recent years, sports competitions in the universities have attracted much attention within the Nigerian sports scene.

This is as a result of the global awareness of the importance of school sports in the development of sports in Nigeria. The need for the improvement of the standard of performance of Nigeria athletes has added a great impetus to the development of school sports programme. This continued emphasis on the improvement of the standard of performances of youths in sports has given rise to the slogan "catch them young" which is a clear vindication of the belief of many Nigerians in the fact that talented young men and women can easily be identified and groomed properly during their formative stages of growth and developments. Universities the world over, are known for producing the best and high profile athletes who distinguish themselves in sports and bring honour to their universities. The University of Port Harcourt for example, has one of the best high sports performance centers in Nigeria with increasing focus on achieving results. Many athletic preparations for national athletes take place there and this may explain student-athletes' excellent performances in NUGA. These achievements can be seen judging from the medals table in past editions of the inter-university games. See table below:

Table 1: Summary of University Sports Achievement in the past five editions of NUGA Games

	Host	Champions	Runners-up	Third Place	Fourth Place
2021 (26 th Edition)	University of Lagos	University of Port Harcourt (61)	University of Lagos(33)	Nile University (15)	University of Ilorin (11)
2017 (25 th Edition)	University of Agriculture, Makurdi	University of Port Harcourt (70)	Ahmadu Bello University (11)	Benson Idahosa University (10)	University of Lagos (9)
2014 (24 th Edition)	Obafemi Awolowo University	University of Port Harcourt (63)	University of Lagos (13)	Obafemi Awolowo University (12)	Ahmadu Bello University (9)

	Host	Champions	Runners-up	Third Place	Fourth Place
2011 (23 rd Edition)	University of Benin	University of Port Harcourt (46)	University of Nigeria (15)	Obafemi Awolowo University (13)	University of Benin (10)
2001 (18 th Edition)	Ahmadu Bello University	Ahmadu Bello University (40)	University of Port Harcourt (19)	University of Ibadan (13)	University of Benin (9)

(Source: <https://en.m/Google> search/Nigerian_University_Games_Association)

Universities in Edo State participate in various sports competitions in Nigeria, namely; Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA), West African University Games (WAUG), among others. This paper review focused on one of the major inter-university sports competitions, NUGA. The ultimate objectives of athletes preparing for any competition is to attain optimal performance. The Nigeria University Game is not an exception of this rule of athletes achieving optimal performances. NUGA is a forum for university athletes who have been identified as talents to represent their universities in a fiesta that engages all Nigeria universities which is hosted biennially thereby promoting friendship amongst university student-athletes in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Universities Games Association (NUGA) was founded in 1965, shortly after the first West African Universities Games which was held earlier that same year at the University of Ibadan (Olaleye, 2022). In Nigeria, University-level sports events are organized by the Nigeria Universities Games Association (NUGA) which hosts the University Games (an Inter-University Sports Competition). The first NUGA was held in 1966 at the University of Ibadan. NUGA currently has over eighty universities as members; this includes both private and public Universities. Only a few sports were initially involved but the number has increased. The sporting competitions being organized now are athletics, badminton, basketball, chess, cricket, football, handball, hockey, Judo, Karate, Scrabble, squash, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, volleyball and E-sports.

Several University athletes have represented Nigeria in International competitions such as in common wealth and Olympic Games. Among such athletes are Seyi Olofinjana (football), Vincent Enyeama (football), Bisi Afolabi (athletics), Olumide Oyedeji (Basketball), Chika

Chukwumerije (Taekwondo) and Olusoji Fasuba (athletics) just to mention a few. The NUGA games are held biennially and one of its main objectives according to Olaleye (2022) is to discover young talents across the universities that can become future athletes for the country.

Competences are central to the development of sports talent. In a broad sense, coaching is an area of sports management that actually ensures that the athletes' potentials are released for the maximization of performance. The coach who demonstrates valuable managerial competences can accomplish his objectives and ensure the expression of the athletes' maximum sports performance outcomes. Sports coaches' competences are deemed vital to ensure quality athletes' evaluation in a competition. Thus, helping athletes to improve their talents, skills and performances are crucial in the sports environment. Meanwhile, athletes' performance in individual, dual and team sports are seen through performance results obtained by athletes in a competition. These results could serve as a basis for improving athletes as well as university sports performance. It is likely that the efforts and emphasis on improving the standard of performance of student-athletes to enhance sports performance success, cannot be said to have yielded any significant improvement especially in public and private universities in Edo state in terms of winning gold, silver or bronze medals. Judging from the available medal's table records of NUGA since inception, all universities in Edo State that participates in NUGA have not had reasonable and tremendous performance outcomes in most of the competitions, as it is observed that they had recorded fluctuating performances. Perhaps, this could be as a result of the competences possessed by the sports coaches. Could this situation be attributed to the seeming poor sports coaching competences that probably could be in existence in these universities?

Observed Issues on Sports performance in Nigerian Universities

Arising from the foregoing, the perceived conditions of sports in some universities in Nigeria appear disturbing especially in universities in Edo state that participate in NUGA. Hence, it is likely that some universities sports coaches do not possess the required competence to achieve success. Thus, most universities are unable to make any noticeable impact into the nation's quest for excellence in sports, as not many university based athletes have become elite athletes, representing Nigeria as is the case in other climes. And in situations where university based sports talents are discovered, they are not sustained, preserved and of course, engaged in subsequent games. This may equally be the situation in universities in Edo State. The observed poor sports

performance outcomes of universities in Edo State could be evident in their inconsistent positions on the medals table in the various Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA) competitions especially looking at the past five (5) editions. Could this situation be attributed to the sports coaches' managerial competency level in managing available resources?

Going further, there are a number of administrative competency parameters which require effective mobilization before and during competitions. The parameters include: skill competence, adaptability competence, knowledge competence, competence in foresight, competence in creativity, and competence in communication. It is not certain if these parameters are adequately considered in the management of sports in these universities.

The Role of Coaches in Managing Athletes

Eshani (2017) posits that one of the most important factors that could affect athletes' performance is the sports coach. The sports coach plays a vital role in the development and improvement of athletic skills that are necessary for winning a competition. Williams, Kenow, Roger and Salim (2013) see the coach as the most important person in determining the quality and the effectiveness of an athletic program. Going by this then; the role coaches play, are significant to the overall success of the team's performance. Coaching according to Kim and Cruz (2016) involves motivating, instructing, supporting and enabling athletes to fulfill their fullest potentials. Bush and Silk (2010) argued that coaching is a method that functions beyond directing practice and training; they opined that coaches' role expands and involves taking responsibility for players (athletes) outside the practice/competition environment as well as being aware of their overall social and psychosocial wellbeing and development. A coach is a person that should help the athletes to evaluate their performances to the highest level that they can get.

The role of coaching in sports is important in ensuring quality athletes in competition. Philips (2017) and Paling (2014) argued that, coaches play various roles in their profession. For example, coaches can be asked to be teachers, organizers, motivators, leaders and counselors. William, Jerome, kenow, Rogers and Sartain (2013) opined that coaches ensure the quality and the effectiveness of any sports programme. Sports coaches help athletes' skill in a wide range of tasks from sequential development and mastery of skills for the beginners to become more specialized, physical, technical, tactical and more elastic.

Coaching is a complex task and required the use of different strategies and behaviours to fulfill its expectations. So, sports coaches must have good knowledge; need to develop competencies or skills and high motivation in carrying out responsibilities to produce quality athletes (Fouss & Troppmann, 2018). Coaches do have many responsibilities both on and off the field. Generally, coaches are required to plan practice, check equipment, serve as an athletic trainer and manage the wellbeing of all the athletes in the team. At the same time, coaches must try to develop a winning attitude by helping athletes set achievable goals.

The role of the sports coaches at the university level involves communicating the institutional sports goals to the athletes. Therefore, the university sports coaches play a high visible role in recruiting athletes and enhancing the public images of the institution. Consequently, they must diligently seek to effectively communicate the missions of the institutions to prospective student-athletes. Thus, when the student-athletes goals and institution goals match, then all parties involved can benefit from the experience of the sporting activities.

Sports Coaches' Coaching Competency

Coaching is a complex profession; one of the intricate aspects of coaching is to understand the relationships and effects that coaches have in regards to their athletes. In sports, the coaching competency of coaches is central to the development of athletes' talent and performance. In most sporting events, athlete's performance is determined by the athletes' technical, tactical, physiological and psychological/sociological characteristics (Bangsbo, 2015). The term competency refers to the knowledge, skills and performance abilities required to perform a job effectively. Coaching Competency is regarded as the extent of beliefs among coaches on how it will affect learning and performance of athletes (Dalton, 2017). Coaching competency is the capability, skills, capacity, technique and proficiency of fitness of a coach in which he is able to achieve the desired results for both himself and the athletes. Coaches are constantly making evaluations about their athletes while student-athletes are also formulating perceptions about their coaches' coaching competency, personality and behaviours. These perceptions of coaching competency could alter important insights into valuable information on sports coaches/athletes relationship (Crafty, 2001 as cited in Chiu et al, 2014). Thus, it seems appropriate to consider the perspectives of athletes when assessing their coaches' performances.

A competent coach should possess some skills in choosing the right approach, technique and tone of language when approaching their athletes. A competent coach that gives high satisfaction to his/her athletes may motivate them to perform confidently in their sports. Coaching competency is a source of competitive advantage in any sports. It is a complex task that needs specific strategies and behavior to fulfill certain expectations. Coaches need to have the ability and confidence with the aim of coordinating and aligning the teams' game strategy with the opponent's strengths and weaknesses. Coaches need to have the ability and confidence in aligning game strategies and athletes strength.

Student-Athletes Sports Participation in Universities in Nigeria

Sports play a very critical and significant role in any athlete's life. Early engagement of students in different sports activities has positive effects and enhances their healthy lifestyle and prevents them from joining negative activities. Nowadays, students' involvements in sports competition have been increasing. Therefore, to improve and enhance student-athletes performance, specifically in sports competitions, it is deemed vital to assess the variable that influence and contribute to the student-athletes performance. Thus, adopting a certain coaching style, behaviour, and acquiring coaching competences must be of paramount importance since it can have a great impact on athletes.

In recent years, Nigerian universities have been blamed for failing to produce elite athletes for international sports competitions. Some of the factors responsible for this are that only very few Nigerian universities give recognition to the athletic performance of their students. Very few Nigerian universities possess adequate standard sports facilities and equipment that can be utilized to produce Olympic champions. There seems to be a little or no relationship between the State Sports Councils coaches, Ministry of Sports' officials and the university coaches' efforts to produce talented athletes and serious motivation strategies are either absent or not properly utilized by university coaches and sports administrators. Another hindrance to student-athletes sports participation and development in Nigerian universities today is the uncompromising attitude of the universities to sports by not combining sports and Education to run simultaneously as well as the negative disposition of some academic staff towards sports. Yet, the universities are expected to perform wonders in producing Olympic champions at international sports meets with all these glaring hindrances. This recrimination stems from the fact that most successful sporting nations of

the world like the United States, Russia, and Germany recruit most of their athletes from among the universities. Since Nigeria's appearance and participation at the World University Games (F.I.S.U), it was only in 1975 that a home-based athlete in the person of Late Major Taiwo Ogunjobi won a bronze medal in 400 metres hurdles in Rome (Jeroh, 2012).

Conclusion

The paper is an attempt to analyze the coaching competences of sports coaches engaged in Universities in Nigeria with special interest in Universities in Edo state on how they can bring about success in the sports performance outcome of student-athletes in these universities. Also, the role of sports coaches in managing athletes; sports coaches' coaching competency as well as student-athletes sports participation in universities in Nigeria were reviewed and discussed.

Recommendations

For the objectives of sports to be achieved in any organization, sports coaches should among other things bring to the fore, their managerial competences. When there is effective sports administration, sports administrators would map out activities to be performed by coaches. They will put machineries together to get the activities done and hire qualified, competent and capable coaches to carry out the activities. In doing these, tasks will be distributed accordingly with corresponding authority. There will be harmonization of the activities of all the coaches and departments and ways to bring about and expand revenue for the success of the organization will be fashioned out. When all these are put in place, effective sports administration in the Universities would naturally bring about improvement and success in university sports.

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