REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN KENYA'S SPORTS AS A BASIS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The history of Kenya's sports can be divided into three main phases: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. Each of these phases witnessed various levels and forms of sports development in the country. With the increasing popularity of sports over the years, deliberate efforts and strategies have continued to be made to improve sports participation and performance. Whereas some milestones have been realized towards this end over the years, the sports scene is still faced with a myriad of issues and challenges which militate against the desired aim of achieving sports excellence in the country. This paper therefore, highlights the management shortcomings and problems that should be addressed so as to serve as a basis for future development of sports in the country.

Key words: Management, sports, athlete(s).

Introduction: A Historical Overview of Sports in Kenya

(i) Sports During the Pre-Colonial Period

In Kenya, as indeed, in many other countries of Africa and the rest of the world, sport is as old as mankind. It dates back to the origin of man (Asembo, 2003). Indeed, Njororai (2003) refers to the very old forms of sports as 'traditional sports and games' which were closely related to the activities that man engaged in to avail food and defend himself against aggressors. The traditional games and sports are highlighted as having included the following:

(a) Spear-throwing that was related to hunting and the need for defence against hostile environment (Mazrui, 1986).
(b) Running/racing, which was geared towards meeting the need for food through hunting.
(c) Swimming which was learnt and developed due to the need for fishing and communication across large rivers and lakes.
(d) Wrestling was also widespread as a way of identifying strong members who would be relied upon to defend their communities.
(e) Singing and dancing were a common phenomenon during planting, harvesting and initiation ceremonies.

(ii) Sports During the Colonial Period

The colonization of Kenya by the British in 1895, declaration of the country as a colony of Britain in 1920 and their subsequent rule up to 1963 marked another new chapter for sports in Kenya. It was during that colonial rule that the modern forms of sports and games were introduced in the country while the traditional games and sports were discarded as being primitive. According to Wamukoya (1994), various games and sports that had been popularized in Europe (Britain, in particular), North America and Asia during World War I and II were also transported to Kenya. The key milestones that were realized during this period were:

(i) Introduction of the modern sports in Kenya, some of which were,
Unfortunately, played along racial lines. For instance, tennis, cricket, rugby and football were introduced by the British in the first part of 20th Century, Basketball by American missionaries in 1950s, and hockey by the Sikhs and Goans in the 1950s. According to Bhushan (1988), rugby and tennis were games that were strictly for ‘whites only’ and hockey was a preserve for the Kenyan Indians at that time.

(ii) Development of Physical Training curriculum for schools that focused on the teaching of the modern sports.

(iii) Introduction of competitive sports in the 1950s. Competitions at school, community and international levels were initiated.

(iv) Kenya made her debut at international competitions, particularly at the Olympics Games that were held in 1956 in Melbourne, Australia. This, indeed, marked the beginning of Kenya’s participation in the many other international competitions.

(v) The 1950s also marked the founding of several national sports associations that played a role in the management and administration of sports in the country. They included Kenya Amateur Athletic Association in 1950, Kenya Hockey Union in 1956, National Football Association in 1956, Kenya Rugby Football Union in 1921, and others.

(vi) Open spaces were set-aside in urban and rural areas to accommodate sporting activities.

(iii) Sports in the Post-Colonial Period

As from the time Kenya attained independence from the British colonial rule in 1963, the successive post-colonial governments have continued to embrace and develop sports. A number of measures and strategies have been put in place to enhance the management and administration of sports in the country. The key milestones in creating structures of sports management include:

(i) Establishment of the Kenya National Sports Council in 1966 to coordinate the activities of the national sports federations and also assist in the preparation of national teams for the All-Africa Games.

(ii) Creation of the department of sports in the ministry in charge of sports in 1989 as a government arm that oversees sports programmes and activities in the country.

(iii) Establishment and operations of the National Olympic committee – Kenya to facilitate Kenya’s participation in the Olympic Games.

(iv) Establishment of national sports federations to coordinate and organize sporting activities in their respective sports disciplines.

(v) Establishment of national sports federations for educational institutional to oversee sports programmes in the institutions.

(vi) Government’s provision of ‘some’ funding for sports development in the annual financial budget.

(vii) The local authorities have welfare departments in the cities, town, municipal and county councils whose responsibilities, among others, is to render sports services.

(viii) A substantial number of government departments, parastatals and other quasi-government organizations have sports departments which organize and coordinate sports programmes for their employees.

Inspite of the strides that have been made towards ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the management of sports in Kenya, there are still a myriad of managerial and administrative problems and challenges that need to be addressed. Outstanding of these include the following:

(a) Persistent wrangles in the key national sports federations. According to Badawy (1993), conflicts are a natural phenomenon where human relationships exist but the dysfunctional or destructive forms conflict must be avoided, minimized, controlled or managed. However, the persistent conflicts in the national federations, and in the Kenya Football Federation in particular, have been responsible, to a large measure, for the low standard of football in Kenya. The negative consequences of the conflicts have included withdrawal of corporate sponsorship, diversion of attention from
development of the game, court cases which have tended to consume valuable time and substantial sums of money, neglect of players and officials and banning of the national federation from participation in international competitions. Failure to manage conflicts that lead to such adverse effects is an indication of weakness in the management procedures and practices.

(b) The management of sports in Kenya is, to a large extent, not professionalized. A large fraction of government sports officers in the department of sports, for instance, are not trained professionals in the area of sports management and administration. There is also no provision for professional qualification for those who aspire and eventually become officials in the national sports federations. Consequently, leadership in sports federations is open to 'every other' person who has the interest to provide the required leadership so long as he/she is able to win the elections.

(c) There has been a long-standing controversy between the roles of the government’s department of sports and the Kenya National Sports Council. Other than the single distinction of the department being the arm of government and the sports council being the umbrella non-governmental organization for all the national sports federations, a duplication of roles of the two organizations is evident.

(d) There is apparent conflict of roles of the government sports officers in the districts and those of the local council sports officers or welfare officers. The local authorities personnel’s roles stretch upto the grassroot level but are not answerable to the District Sports Officers who are expected to run sports in their respective districts but do not have their own officers at the grassroots level. Any pulling together of the efforts of the government sports officers and sports officials in the local authorities is based on goodwill.

(e) The role of the international sports federations in handling and intervening in matters of the national sports federations has not been clearly spelt out. The international federations have constantly stood accused of intervening in the affairs of their national sports federation without any regard for national interests and needs. As consequence of their interventions, inefficient, ineffective and or sometimes corrupt officials have had to remain in office or some compelled to leave office.

(f) The need for regular review of constitutions of the various national federations appears to receive lukewarm attention. This position arises from the fact that the period of time over which reviews of constitutions of the various national sports federations should be enforced are not clearly specified. As such, some national sports federations have tended to take the risk of using outdated constitutions that are out of touch with current situations and even perceptions.

(g) Planning is an important management function that is quite crucial to the development of organizations and programmes. Long-term plans, for instance, are necessary in forecasting the achievements that should be realized in a period of at least more than ten years. Such plans assist in committing members of an organization to work towards achieving what has been logically decided upon in advance. Unfortunately, it has not been quite evident as to whether any such planning is done with regard to the development of sports in Kenya as information on such plans are rarely made known to the public, including the key players in matters of sports. Consequently, the direction to be followed in terms of general sports development, development and expansion of sports facilities, training of managerial and technical personnel and other areas that require attention is not quite clear.

(h) The other important management function in sports is that of providing direction or guidelines on how tasks should be performed. This may involve formulation of policies, rules and regulations that should be implemented to bring about success (Bucher & Krotee, 1993). Unfortunately, to this date, Kenya has not succeeded in formulating a national policy to guide
the development of sports in the country.

(i) Sports management personnel in Kenya have the responsibility of attending to the needs of all the key players in the field of sports, including, the athletes, coaches, trainers and other technical and support staff. Outstanding of the needs include provision of adequate incentives, meeting their training needs and addressing any disagreements amongst them (Bucher & Krotee, 1993). It is however, disturbing that complaints about inadequate or absence of allowances and other incentives for Kenyan athletes on national assignments have been common (Njororai & Wekesa, 2000). A substantial number of Kenyan athletes have continued to relocate to countries in Europe and Asia, and even changed their citizenship in their pursuit for better incentives. Cases of national coaches resigning from their coaching roles due to non-payment of their salaries and allowances are widely reported in the media. In addition, there is no centralized programme or institution that coordinates the training of sports personnel in the country; coaches are, for instance, trained by uncoordinated local and international organizations and institutions (Mwisukha, 2007).

(j) Funding for sports development has been a persistent problem faced in the management of sports in Kenya (Mwisukha, 2007; Shehu, 1998). In a study on the training of athletics coaches in Kenya, Mwisukha (2007) notes that inadequate funding is the main problem faced in the implementation of training programmes for the coaches. Apart from this, contingents of teams destined for international competitions are often reduced due to limited funds to cater for their allowances and upkeep during training and competition (Shehu, 1998).

(k) The fact that some of the modern sports were introduced in Kenya along racial lines has made a number of them to continue being dominated by some racial and ethnic groups in terms of management and active participation. Consequently, talent identification in such sports tends to be confined to the concerned racial and ethnic groups.

Way Forward for Management of Sports in Kenya

In view of the problems and challenges associated with the management of sports in Kenya, there is need for streamlining of the same. The following suggestions are advanced towards that end:

(i) There is urgent to professionalise the management of sports in the country. A requirement for professional training in sports management and or related fields as criteria for appointment or election into management positions should be put in place and enforced. Such an undertaking is squarely the responsibility of the government’s department of sports.

(ii) In order to regulate the management of sports, the formulation and enforcement of a national policy on sports is mandatory (Munayi, 2000). The national policy should capture the following key areas:

- Specify the structure and hierarchy for sports management in the country. This includes outlining clear roles of the various organizations involved in the management of sports so as to eliminate duplication and conflict in the roles of the organizations.

- The policy should also highlight on various sports development plans and strategies.

- Since conflicts have been a disturbing phenomena in Kenya’s sports organizations, the policy will have to put forward concrete measures and structures for conflict resolution in the organizations.

- Acquisition and proper utilization of resources in the realm of sports management should be captured. The way resources such as money, manpower, time and other material resources are to be availed and used must be clearly specified in the policy document to avoid abuse and or wastage of the resources.

- In view of the importance and complexity of a policy document, it should be formulated by suitably
knowledgeable and skilled personnel.

(iii) The need for a firmly established national training programme for sports personnel is of great necessity. Mwisukha (2007), for instance, advocates for a centralized national academy, institute or organization to train sports managers and other technical personnel. Such an institution should be set up with joint efforts of the government, national sports organizations and their international bodies so that the certification is recognized by all the concerned parties. This way, the much-needed personnel who are knowledgeable and skilled will be availed to steer the development of sports in the country.

(iv) Since funding of sports programmes has been a thorny issue in the development of sports, more alternative ways of raising the required funds must be constantly explored. This is particularly necessary in the face of the ever-diminishing government budget for sports (Mwisukha, 2007; Shehu 1998). Shehu (1998) therefore outlines the many other alternative ways of raising funds for sports programmes as including the following:
- Institution of raffles and lotteries.
- Organizing more sports clinics, coaching courses and seminars from which money can be generated.
- Maximizing on gate-collections and hire of sports facilities for national and international events.
- Initiating of sponsorship deals with the corporate organizations. This is an endeavour that should involve having knowledge of potential sponsors, their interest in giving sponsorship and developing mutual relationships.

Conclusion

Although it is not possible to eliminate all the problems and challenges facing the management of sports in Kenya, there is need for strategies to minimize them and ensure effective and efficient management of sports in the country. The most viable strategies are only possible if the sports programmes in the country are managed by personnel who possess the right knowledge and skills of management, and committed to apply the appropriate approaches, procedures and policies geared towards enhancing the standard of sports.

References


