RECREATION AS THE BASIS OF COMPETITIVE SPORTS
IN KENYAN UNIVERSITIES

G. M. KIGANJO & T. A. WASONGA, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes the vital role played by recreation as a foundation of enhancing mass participation and competitive engagement in sports in Kenyan universities. The tendency of Kenyan universities has been to put more emphasis on competitive sports at the expense of recreation. A related approach suggests a need for a change. Based on the spillover, and philosophical model of sporting programmes, the paper examines recreational sport as the basis of competitive sports. This is done against the existing background of various types of competitive and recreation sports in Kenyan public universities. Sport involvement requires an understanding of constraints related to provision and availability of facilities, equipment, funding, programmes, time, manpower, and sport policy. The paper outlines various suggestions to increasing levels of recreative participation by first emphasizing recreation followed by instructional physical education and competitive sports while diminishing constraints affecting sport involvement.

Key words: Recreation, Competitive Sports, Spillover theory, Observation method, mass participation

INTRODUCTION.

Sport and physical education have been recognized as an indispensable part of culture in institutions of higher learning (Tokunaga M. et al 1995). Further, universities have been identified as avenues that contribute greatly to the popularization of sport in their respective countries (Ibid.). Given the indisputable role of sport, recreation and physical education in society as avenues of socialization, excellence, cohesion, social control, collective conscience and agents of change, most universities all over the world have established mechanism to implement these important aspects (De Krop et. al 1996, Nebiolo 1994). This is in line with the International University Sport Federation (FISU) recommendations that all students be given the opportunity to regularly participate in some of sporting activities be it for recreation or competition (Suda 1994).

Universities in Kenya have been charged with the broad tripartite responsibility of disseminating knowledge, research and service (Ogot 1995). In partial fulfillment of human service mission, public universities in Kenya have traditionally designated the implementation of sport services to the various sport and games departments. These
departments have been mandated to provide and promote varied sport programs and services to the entire university community, all students, staff, significant others and the community around the universities. Consequently, sport administrators, facilities, team and individual sport activities have been established to achieve this goal. The structure, organization and nature of the activities reflect colonial legacy. These activities include associations for football, volleyball, rugby, basketball, netball, track and field, tennis, swimming, martial arts, badminton, squash, cricket, handball, and rounders.

While it is desirable to have varied sport activities, it is also important and best to think about and consequently have quantity and quality sport programs that are designed to benefit majority of the university community. This is in tune with the philosophy of FISU and philosophy of campus recreation, which stresses equality of opportunity, freedom of choice and total involvement in recreation programs by all (Bennett 1983, Park et al. 1990).

RECREATION AS THE STARTING POINT OF SPORT PROGRAMS.

It is the opinion of the authors that public universities in Kenya have tended to concentrate more attention on competitive sport programs for the few at the expense of recreational programs for all. Based on sound philosophical models, recreation and leisure theoretical framework and experience from other countries, this paper urges that recreation programs are the foundation and laboratory that helps to stimulate talent identification, development, and continued participation in competitive sport programs. Indeed, it has been realized that;

Recreation sport program help to develop an interest in many sports; this interest carries over into adult living and provides the basis for many happy leisure hours (Bucher and Krotee 1993:95)

In China, significant relationship between participation in sporting activities and recreative leisure has been established. The backbone of success in competitive sports appears to be the promotion of recreative activities using mass exercises, systematic and long term training of elite athletes (Fu FaPoon 1991). Most reputable universities in the USA, Canada and Germany have set up mechanisms where majority of the students, staff and the community around the campuses participate to the maximum in various recreational activities (Bennett 1983, Bucher and Krotee 1993, Parks et al 1990). In Japan, sport has successfully reached the communities via the various sporting programs in the universities. The aim of the physical activities is to achieve bodily strength and stimulation of the mental activity (Suda 1994). At the end of the Second World War, participation in sport and physical education was obligatory to all students in the universities. There are now many university clubs offering recreational and competitive sport activities for all. This approach has created a wide base from which it has been possible to tap and develop sport talent (Ibid.).
CONSTRAINTS TO RECREATION INVOLVEMENT.

Critical examination of the universities in Kenya reveal lack of recreation or mass participation in activities among students, staff and the community around the Universities. Participation in physical activity seems to be accorded low priority. Sport administrators have attributed this phenomena to several inhibiting factors that include inadequate funding, personnel, poor facilities and equipment, lack of sport policy, congestion in academic learning time, insufficient recreation and leisure education and unstandardized semester dates (Kiganjo 1995). Further, there is very little evidence of mass recreation in Kenyan society. The priority seems to be placed on acquiring money and property to such an extent that spaces previously set aside for public recreation especially in urban centers have now been converted into private use. The colonial legacy of pursuing education for white collar jobs, and the emphasis on academic excellence through stringent examination systems, have all tended to down-grade mass participation in physical education and physical activities in institutions of learning in Kenya (Kiganjo 1996). Since universities are a microcosm of the whole society, the value systems in the general society will definitely be reflected within the universities (Coakley 1984). However, constraints notwithstanding, sport administrators within universities are still obligated to be sensitive to the recreational needs of the majority of their clients. This cannot be achieved if concentration is put on competitive sport programs alone.

RECREATION AS AN INTEGRAL PHASE WITHIN UNIVERSITIES.

Recreational sport activities are considered an integral phase of the total sport programs in universities. They help to complete a sport package in higher institutions that encompass instructional physical education programs, intramural, extramural and sport clubs. (Bucher and Krotee 1993, Parks et al 1990, Peterson 1976, Wade and Baker 1995). The traditional model of sport programming places recreation and other programs in isosceles triangular formation. In this formulation, recreation appears between physical education at the base and competitive programs at the apex (Bucher and Krotee 1993).

A philosophical model of sport programs in institutions of higher learning places recreational programs within an interdependent and equal relationship with both physical education and competitive sport programs (Jones 1971). Based on these models it appears that no institution would justify the exclusion of recreational sport programs from its overall sport policy and sport programs. Each of these programs makes useful contribution to the achievements of educational objectives and holistic development of individuals (Bucher & Krotee 1993).

According to the Spillover theory, recreation and leisure lay the basis of understanding recreation and subsequent human participation in physical activities (Bammel and Bammel 1982). The theory views recreation as being parallel to work, life's obligatory activities, and as a mechanism that enables the carry-over effect to other activities and later life (Ibid.). Using this theory, recreational sport is considered as the foundation upon which competitive (elite-focused) sport programs should be based. Going by this theory, we
need to realize the relevance of recreation and subsequently re-focus attention to begin early implementation of sound recreative programs in all institutions that offer sport. By considering recreational sport as a need, serving as a springboard, we are better placed not only to reach many clients but also to have quality competitive sport programs.

It can further be urged that people tend to participate in those activities that are available in their environment and those that they are familiar with. This partly explains the popularity of some sports in Kenya such as football, volleyball and athletics. These are some of the activities that Kenyans were exposed to early in the schooling system during the colonial period. Those sports that previously exhibited segregate tendencies in participation such as cricket, tennis, golf, squash and badminton are finding it difficult to gain country wide popularity in the present post independence era in Kenya (Kiganjo 1996).

In practice, a recreational sport program attracts majorities who are usually beginners and those with moderate levels of skill. The focus of recreation programs is on the entire spectrum of institutional members, irrespective of their abilities and skills. This is one of the main reasons that justifies the use of recreation as an avenue for achievement of sport for mass recreation, and as foundation for talent identification. In contrast, competitive sport programs are usually designed for those few individuals who are most talented, competent, and highly skilled (Park et al 1990). It creates a feeling of achievement, competence, and self-worth and can result into generation of funds, good image and public relations for any institution (Ibid.). Since the focus on competitive sports programs alone is undesirable and unprofessional, the recommendation is to integrate competitive sport programs with recreational sports as postulated by the spill-over theory. This paradigm is also supported by the National Intramural, Recreation Sport Association (NIRSA) which sets standards and goals that have helped in the professional development and delivery of recreations in colleges and universities in USA (Bucher and Krotee 1993, Wade and Baker 1995).

Primary and secondary schools in Kenya have comprehensive sport programs that seem to succeed in providing opportunities to many students to participate and develop their sport talents. Many of the previous and present talented Kenyan youths that have competed at national and international levels have been identified, nurtured and developed through these school based sport programs. (Hardman et al. 1991).

Despite concentrating on competitive sport programs, the performance of Kenyan universities in national and international elite competitions has yet to be impressive. The few selected university representatives at the world university games have not made their mark felt at the top Universaide records as is the case with the Kenyans performance in the Olympics, commonwealth and other world sports (Tokunaga 1995). Additionally, Kenyan universities have not been able to produce high level competitors, and at the same time, sustain them to participate for long duration in most of the top national and other international sporting events, as is the case in western countries. It is likely that this is due to the absence of a wide and broad sport recreation base among other factors. There are also other approaches in achieving the same objective to that of using the sport recreation program.
An alternative to the recreations program is the instructional physical education program, which assists in laying the basis for learning correct sport knowledge, skills, techniques and attitudes. In countries such as Japan where physical education was mandatory before the second world war, competitive sport programs were successful (Bennet et al. 1983). In the absence of mandatory physical education programs in most Kenyan universities (as is the case now), it is only logical to strengthen the recreation programs to be the foundation and laboratory for competitive sport programs. The only physical education program in all the universities in Kenya at the moment is at Kenyatta University. This program does not offer physical education to all the students and therefore the need for mass recreation and recreation education for all students is still unfulfilled.

**SCOPE AND NATURE OF RECREATION PROGRAMS.**

The nature of recreation is such that it encompasses voluntary individual involvement, enjoyment, satisfaction and wholesome development in a wide range of activities during leisure time. Recreation programs are broadly categorized into intramural, extramural and sport clubs. Recreation activities include sport and games, outdoor recreation, music, sport clubs, fitness, indoor games, hobbies, arts, drama and socio-cultural events (Ford and Blanchard 1993, Yukic 1970, Wade and Baker 1995). It is the sport and games aspect of recreation that is probably the largest of them all (Bucher et al 1984). The value of sport recreation is indisputable. They contribute to the physical, social, health, emotional well-being, they help in the promotion of skills, physical fitness, wellness, happiness and cultural opportunities. All these increases the ability to enjoy life, satisfaction, promotes lifelong learning and participation in sports (Bucher and Kraut 1993, Ford and Blanchard 1993, Ellis 1988, Iso-Ahola 1980, Yukic J 1970).

The competitive nature in elite sport performance has a place within recreational sport programs. It is possible to have competitions within the intra mural, extra murals, and sport clubs, but one which is geared to the abilities and skills of different groups within a given university community. This can be successfully accomplished using different competitive methods as league meets round robin and tournaments. Additionally, the cooperative nature of recreational programs is also still complimentary to the competitiveness of elite sport programs (Bucher and Krotee 1993, Gill 1993).

The challenges of establishing mass recreation as the foundation of competitive sport programs in Kenyan Universities can be met if this need is brought to the attention of university administrators, all the students, staff and significant others. Indeed a need exists for maintaining recreational sport programs within each university that meets the needs of everyone; that are professionally organized and managed with the welfare of the individual participants in mind.
RECOMMENDATIONS.

The following suggestions and recommendations could be implemented to establish sport recreation as the basis of competitive sports within universities in Kenya.

a) Carry out a survey on recreational interests and needs of all the students (male, female, handicapped etc.), staff, significant others and the community. Based on the findings, then relevant recreation programs can be effected in each of the universities.

b) Formulate and establish clear goals, objectives, policies and procedures for each of the various sport programs and activities. This could then be written in handbook form, be well publicized and made available to the entire university community. The policies and procedures could include areas such as scheduling, health, safety, officiating, protests, eligibility, standards, forfeits, payment, point systems, awards, user groups, facility and equipment use, and control among other variables.

c) Establish mechanisms to provide recreation education that enable most of students and staff to receive basic instruction and acquire fundamental sport skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

d) The administration of the identified recreational activities should be student based with guidance from sport administrators and the dean of students office. The use of student leaders, captains, sport council and various volunteers from student body could be encouraged in this endeavour.

e) Those faculty and staff members whose role puts them in direct contact with students such as wardens, deans office, counselling, health and physical education sections staff could be effectively utilized in the management of the recreation programs.

f) The general faculty, staff members and their families need also to be incorporated within the recreation programs of the universities.

g) The recreation program should encompass varied and wide activities such as sports and games, outdoor recreation (nature walks, mountain climbing, camping, bird watching and cycling), sport clubs, indoor activities, fitness (e.g., aerobics), music, dancing, arts, drama.

h) A mechanism could be formulated within the university sport structure to help in the coordination of other non-sport recreation programs with the respective sections.

i) To reduce conflict and friction between recreation, competitive programs and any other programs aspects such as facilities, personnel, funding, time, transportation and communication would require proper coordination. These factors could be apportioned according to the set objectives and the extent to which each phase
achieves desired outcome.

j) Each program should have inbuilt evaluation techniques and procedures for frequent feedback that can help revise, modify or institute new programs where necessary.

k) Sport administrators need to frequently get in contact with and coordinate all the sport bodies and associations in and outside the country. Most of these sport bodies have excellent programs that are geared towards popularizing and increasing participation levels for each specific activity.

CONCLUSION

Recreational sport programs represent a very important component of the total educational processes within all the Universities in Kenya. However, they contribute to important qualities such as acting as the foundation of competitive sports to expose students to a wide range of activities, and optimize students potential with pleasure and in company of others. Well developed recreational programs will enable the majority to benefit by improving their physical body functions, health, learning the virtues of self discipline, cooperation, leadership, commitment and control which are crucial in mobilizing people besides identifying talent needed for competitive sport. We are now living a world of change where forces of structural adjustment programs (SAPS), accountability, transparency and computer technology are knocking hard on the doors of our universities (Toffler 1970). As we approach the year 2000 and beyond, sport administrators in the universities are going to increasingly find university administrators, students and staff requiring more changes especially towards the need to provide recreational programs. The time to respond to this change and need is now.

REFERENCES


