

Policy Implementation and Sports Development in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies have stated that policies give direction to an agencies operation, nevertheless, it is in the implementation that their effectiveness can be measured. This study therefore, aimed at investigating the implementation of policies of the Bayelsa State Sports Council in relation to sports development. One hundred and forty-seven subjects comprising the management staff, organising secretaries, coaches and other sports officers who were purposively selected, participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaire and were analysed descriptively. The findings of the study showed that the Management Staff (80%), Organizing Secretaries (86.2%) and Coaches (81.6%) were of the opinion that some of the sports policies were effectively implemented by the management. The implementation of some of the policies however was fraught with difficulties arising from poor funding, under staffing, inadequate facilities and undue interferences in the council's activities. There is the need for more research work to find out the best approach in addressing those problems that confront sports managers when implementing set policies.

Keywords: Leisure, recreation sport, competitive sport, sports development, council

Introduction

Policies set up by organizations play an important role in maintaining a positive experience for those people the policies would affect (Wikipedia, 2013). Kraus and Curtis (1990) viewed policies as guides to action. They also looked at policies as management guidelines that reflect major departmental principles in the provision of services, operation of facilities, management of personnel or similar areas of management concern, just as the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013) saw policies as definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide determine present and future decisions. In the making of policies, the partisan mutual adjustment process needs to be employed. By this, it meant balancing of the views presented by various stakeholders in policy process. In essence, policy making help managers of public leisure services and other sports organizations to pursue goals and objectives without influence of extraneous forces.

According to Anderson (2005) a policy is a principle or protocol to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. In addition, it is a statement of intent and is implemented as procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by the Board and senior governing body within an organization (Wikipedia, 2013). They are typically promulgated through official written document like the National Sports Policy in Nigeria. In line with the above definitions and assumptions, Althaus, et al, (2007) posited that policy documents often come with the endorsement of organization to legitimize the policy and demonstrate that it is considered in force.

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Thus, policy is a compass showing the way development should go (Ajibua, 2012). Ojeme (2000) cited that any organization that fails to initiate plans and policies for development is heading for doom. He further remarked that organizations will be more effective in the management of all the areas of sport development if there are policies to give guide and direction.

After the creation of Bayelsa State in 1996 and by virtue of the importance of sports to the people, the government set up machinery with the sole aim of developing sports in the state. In this wise, the State Sports Council was to organize and also liaise with the Ministry of Youth and Sports for cooperative assistance. The State Sports Council, like that of Rivers State, was saddled with the responsibility of encouraging sports organizations, coordination and participation in sports at the local government level (Ministry of Information, Rivers State, 1991).

The processes of sports development evolved through three stages. These are recreational sports, organized competitive sports and high performance sports as identified by Best, Blackhurst and Makosky (1992). In whichever stage sports development is involved, it is proper that laid down policies are vigorously implemented. Eboh (2006) was of the opinion that for implementation of any policy to work, it must be properly understood and accepted by all those involved in the implementation. He also observed that difficulties do arise in the process of implementation. This may be due to improper preparation and consultation. Nevertheless, the most important point to emphasize in respect of policy implementation is the extent to which success is attained.

Success is best appreciated when it is attached to the goals set to be pursued by an enterprise. It is then celebrated by all stakeholders of that enterprise. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why each organization takes as vital the issue of policy formulation and implementation. If it is so vital, then every institution is expected to have policies in all its major areas of operation, including marketing, production, purchasing, personnel, facilities, programmes, finance and public relations (Nwanchukwu, 1998).

Oribabor (2003) reasoned that policies are very relevant to progress made in an organization. This is because policies are essential to the efficient running of all the organs that contribute to the total success of the organization. He argued that without policies, there will be little to guide the activities and conduct of the establishment in the pursuit of its goals.

The Nigerian Governments (state and federal) are currently making efforts to improve or develop sports. They have put up modern structures to realize this aspiration. Few of those gestures are ; (i) the building of the ultra-modern sports stadium at Abuja where the 2003 All African Games was held, (ii) setting up a task force called "Team Nigeria" saddled with the responsibility of raising money and mobilizing sports development in the country, (iii) signing sports pact with the Cuban Government (NTA News of 27th July, 2006) and the building of the ultra-modern AdokiyeAmiesiemeka sports complex for the hosting of the Garden City Sports Festival in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

However green the steps taken by various governments (local, state, federal) in developing sports in Nigeria is, each of the 36 states must be carried along. This is the motive behind the creation of State Sports Councils; to develop sports at the grassroots and recruit potential athletes who would represent the states and the nation in international sporting outings. This study was carried out to investigate how sports policies in Bayelsa State are being implemented by the Bayelsa State Sports Council, which is in charge of sports in the state.

Methodology

A total of one hundred and forty-seven respondents (staff) from the Bayelsa State Sports Council comprising; Management (15), Organizing Secretaries (51), Coaches (49), three Sports-officers each from eight sports organizations (24) and eight sports officers of the eight (8) Local Government areas of the state were purposively selected. They were given a copy of the validated questionnaire in an effort to descriptively find out their responses on the implementation of policies and the development of sports in the state. The product moment correlation was used to determine the reliability co-efficient (r) of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Data were also gathered from oral interview conducted, as well as from available records at the offices. The information gathered from the subjects was processed descriptively using mean and percentages. Tables were used to report the findings.

Results

Table 1: How Policies are Initiated and Changed

Number of Policies Changed	Number of Respondents %								
	Management N=15		Secretaries N=51		Coaches N=49		Sports Officers N=32		
Some have been changed	15	100	32	62.7	40	1.6	8	25	
Very few have been changed	12	80	24	47.1	-		-	-	
None has been changed	-	-	16	31.4	-		-	-	
Why they were Changed?									
They lacked merit	-		8	15.6	-		-	-	
They were no longer relevant	15	100	-	-	22	4.8	4	12.5	
We just felt like changing them	-		-	-	9	8.4	-	-	
How they were Changed?									
After due consultation	15	100	4	7.8	-		4	12.5	
Necessary data collection made	-	-	2	3.9	-		-	-	
Sole effort of the Director/Executive	2	13.3	1	1.9	-		-	-	

Table 1 shows the responses of the workers as regards the number of policies changed. It was indicated that some policies had been changed. All respondents in the management cadre, were of the opinion that changes made were based on the changed policies not being relevant and that the changes were made after due consultation. However, majority of respondents of the other cadre had a different view (See Table 1).

Table 2: Policy Implementation Strategy and Level of Implementation

	Implementation of Policies	Number of Respondents %							
		Management N=15		Secretaries N=51		Coaches N=49		Sports Officers N=32	
	Through established procedures	15	100	48	94.1	24	48.9	19	59.4
	Personal initiative of Officers/Executives	8	53.3	40	78.4	42	85.7	28	87.5
	Through consulting firms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Hardly implemented	-	-	4	7.8	-	-	4	12.5
Degree of Policy Implementation									
	Fully implemented	15	100	24	47.1	40	81.6	20	62.5
	Implemented based on circumstance	-	-	44	86.3	32	65.3	18	56.3
	Haphazardly implementation	-	-	8	15.6	2	4.1	-	-

Majority of the respondents indicated that the degree of implementation of policies was high. Management Staff (100%), Coaches (81.6%) and Sports Officers (62.5%) presented full implementation. Similarly 86.3%, 65.3% and 56.3% of the respondents stated that implementation of the policies was based on circumstance respectively. Another majority response recorded was that actual implementation was done through established procedures and personal initiative of officers and executive (See Table 2).

Table 3: Effectiveness of Policies on Sports Programme Development

	Effectiveness	Number of Respondents and Percentage							
		Management N=15		Secretaries N=51		Coaches N=49		Sports Officers N=32	
	Not effective	-	-	32	62.7	10	20.4	22	68.7
	Just effective	-	-	-	-	6	12.2	2	6.3
	Fairly effective	12	80	44	86.2	40	81.6	-	-
	Effective	8	53.3	16	31.4	12	24.5	-	-
	Most effective	4	26.6	-	-	2	4.1	-	-

The respondents were asked to indicate their positions on whether laid down policies of the council on sport programme development were effective or not. Overall majority of the respondents; Management (80%), Secretaries (86.2%), and Coaches (81.6%) agreed that the policies were fairly effective, even though some of the respondents felt that the policies were not effective (See Table). Very few of the Sports officers, did not respond to this statement.

Table 4: Areas Affected in Sports Development

Areas of development	Number of Respondents and Percentage							
	Management N=15		Secretaries N=51		Coaches N=49		Sports Officers N=32	
Development/ expansion on sports facilities	8	53.3	16	31.4	12	24.5	-	-
Increase in volume of participation in sporting facilities	10	66.6	20	39.2	24	48.9	15	46.8
Improvement of the standard of performance of athletes	8	53.3	22	43.1	18	36.7	12	37.5
Improvement on health of individuals	8	53.3	18	35.3	20	40.8	22	68.7
Recruitment of training of qualified sports personnel within units/establishment	9	60	12	23.5	20	40.8	14	43.7
Adequate funding	10	66.6	19	37.3	18	36.7	12	37.5

Table 4 reveals the affected areas in relations to sports development in Bayelsa State. It could be observed as shown in the table that there had been very little development. Nevertheless, there had been a little increase in the level of participation in sporting activities. Some of the respondents believed that there had been a minimal development in the rating in the other areas. One of the aims of the council was to attain an enviable height in the comity of states. This vital aim had not been achieved. For instance, the final medal table of seven previous sports festivals; Imo 1998, Bauchi 2000, Edo 2002, Abuja 2004, the Gateway Games of 2006, the Kaduna games of 2009 and the just concluded 2011 Garden City Games held in Port Harcourt, saw Bayelsa State in the 5th, 6th, 5th, 10th, 4th, 4th and 5th respectively.

Table 5: Factors Affecting the Implementation of Policies

	Number of policies Changed	Number of Respondents and Percentage							
		Management N=15	%	Secretaries N=51	%	Coaches N=49	%	Sports Officers N=32	
	Incompetence of the executives	12	80	16	31.4	12	24.5	5	15.6
	Incompetency of the personnel	4	26.6	12	23.5	6	12.2	13	40.6
	Inadequate facilities	12	80	40	78.4	41	83.6	15	46.8
Why changed?									
	Inadequate funds	15	100	48	4.1	40	81.6	28	87.5
	Inadequate personnel		60	24	7.1	36	73.5	24	75
	Council takes order from ministry leading to undue interference	4	26.6	30	58.8	24	48.9	4	12.5
	Insensitivity of personnel to problems	-	-	8	15.6	-		6	18.7

The subjects' responses on Table 5 showed that greater percentage of respondents believed that inadequate funds and inadequate facilities and equipment were the major problems faced in the course of implementing sports policy programmes (See Table). While some respondents, 60%, 73.5% and 75%, respectively, also believed that there were inadequate personnel to implement the policies, 58.8% of the respondents were of the view that there were undue interferences in the affairs of the council by the supervising ministry. Incompetence of the executives of the council was also sighted by 80% of the management staff as a major factor for the change of policies.

Discussion

Majority of the respondents, especially the Managers (15), believed that policies of the council were usually changed and the changes were done after due consultations and when they were no longer relevant. Ogbulie (2001) had earlier observed that whether the reason for policy changes is genuine or not; abrupt changes are known to have caused a lot of havoc to planning. One wonders how such policy changes could be beneficial to all. The minority number of respondents is of the management cadre and by the result, it does seem that the decisions to effect changes were usually done by management. Inengite (2004) maintained that leaders plan for themselves rather than for people. By this, it meant that the people (stakeholders) should be involved in the planning process of a project.

Majority of the respondents (Management, 100%, Coaches, 81.6% and Sports Officers, 62.5%) were of the opinion that policies of the council were fully implemented.

In other words, implementation of the policies was high. Similarly, implementation was usually carried out through established procedures and personal initiative of the executive. Implementation was also carried out based on prevailing circumstances as presented by 86.3% (Secretaries), 65.3% (Coaches) and 56.3% (Sports Officers) of the respondents. Although fully implemented through the methods used; a question still needs to be asked. Would it really meet its intended goal? Eboh (1999) as earlier mentioned did say that for implementation of any policy to work, it must be properly understood and accepted by all those involved in the implementation.

Another interesting revelation from this study was that majority of the respondents, (Management, 80%, Secretaries, 86.2%, and Coaches, 81.6%) were of the view that effectiveness of the implementation of policies on the development of sports programmes was fair. One however, would not be surprised as to the outcome of the responses coupled with problems that go with implementation, as difficulties do arise every now and then in the process of implementation of policies. This assumption could not be wrong because 62.7% (Secretaries) and 68.7% (Sports Officers) of the respondents opined that the policies were not effective.

The implementation of sports policies did have some positive effect on sports development in Bayelsa State, if some policy statements of the council would need to be perused. In the policy, better and modern facilities and equipment were to be provided and so were regular training of staff to update their knowledge and better motivate them for optimal job performance. The implementation seemed not to be fraught with some of these bottlenecks. That was why the respondents presented a positive viewpoint on the issue of areas affecting sports development by the implementation of the policies. They, Management respondents, claimed that there was increase in the level of participation in sporting activities (Table 4).

Commenting on sports development, the National Sports Policy (2001 and 2009) stated that grassroot development of sports cannot be effectively carried out without the provision of basic equipment and facilities. Similarly, Okunrotifa (1992) noted that facilities create interests and motivate people to perform to their optimal level. The essence of facilities and equipment as incentives or motivating measures may not have turned out to be. The implication is that athletes cannot be adequately prepared for competitions. In order to meet these challenges, facilities and equipment need to be provided (Ministry of Information, Rivers State, 1991).

Sports cannot be developed in an environment where there seems to be undue interference and other vices. Enshrined in the National Sports Policy (2001 and 2009) was a vision of developing sports for the achievement of national unity, to promote social interaction, physical fitness as a way of life and encouraging investment therein as a profitable venture. The results from the respondents however, have shown that these visions may not be attained. The respondents Management (80%), Secretaries (78.4%), and Coaches (83.6%) maintained that facilities and equipment were not adequate. There was also inadequacy of personnel (Table 5). The most disturbing of all the factors militating against better sports development was the issue of funding. The respondents Management (100%), Secretaries (94.1%), Coaches (81.6%) and Sports-officers (87.5%) attested to it that funding was really a problem. It was also stated that the Ministry of Youth and Sports usually interfered in the running of the council.

Studies have also shown that the major source of funding for sports were the Federal, State, and Local Governments (Kraus and Curtis, 1990). The government is the major sponsor of sports in Nigeria (Ajibua, 2011). It is clear that government alone cannot fund the development of sports. This then calls for private organizations to come in and partake in the development of sports in the state.

Policies have been presented to be a major activity of government. (Standeven and De Knop, 1999). Bayelsa State has adequate sports policies put in place via the State Sports Council. These policies could, according to Eboh (1999), be called distributive types.

According to him, these involved government's attempts to extend certain benefit to some individuals or groups in the society who are in dire need of it.

For sports to develop in the state, all the items listed in the policy should be equally enforced. It may be assumed that, no matter the technique adopted to arrive at a policy choice, if the implementation is taken for granted, a resounding failure may occur (Famakinwa, 2001). If set policies are vigorously implemented, sports would be well developed in Bayelsa State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following conclusions were drawn based on the finding of the study: some of these findings include the existence policies that had been changed and the implementation of policies being fairly effective.

Laid-down policies of the council were fully implemented. Being so, the effectiveness of the implementation of the policies on sports development programmes was fair. Nevertheless, the implementation was fraught with some problems. There was lack of adequate facilities, inadequate personnel and under-funding of the council as well as lack of autonomy for Sports Council. There was undue interference in the affairs of the council. These factors have negative impact on sports development in the state.

The saying is true that 'he who pays the piper dictates its tune. It is high time professionals who are in charge of sports, either at the public or private level, be given freedom and encouragement to practice the acquired skills. Perhaps this will help in moving sports to a high pedestal where most advanced nations have reached.

There is also the need for more research work to find out the best approach(es) in addressing those problems that confront sports managers when implementing set policies.

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