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Nigeria's Debased Values System at the Modern Era: Implications for Sports Development

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Abstract

The paper discusses the Nigeria's debased values system at the modern era with its implications on sports development. Values system of any society greatly directs the behaviours and attitudes of the individuals in the society. Generally, the shift in the traditional values system of most Nigerians to a debased values system in the modern era as exemplified in the quest for money, age cheating, unpatriotism, ethno-tribalistic sentiments and inclination, lack of time consciousness or "African time", examination malpractice, who do one know and mediocrity syndrome, among others influence their behaviours and attitudes towards national development especially sports development. These debased values system have far-reaching implications to sports participants, organization and administration of sports, provision of sports facilities and equipment, recruitment and appointment of sports administrators into sports ministries and associations. The Nigeria's debased values system is not good for the development of sports at the local, state, national and international levels. Among the recommendations are that National Orientation Agency should embark on re-orientation campaigns and enlightenment on the effect of debased values on national and sports development; anti-graft agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should arrest and prosecute sports leaders who embezzle sports funds, and Nigerian primary, secondary and tertiary education should strengthen and emphasize moral and proper value education in their curriculum.

Key words: Debased values system, sports development, modern era, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The behaviours and attitudes of individuals of any social system are greatly influenced by their values. Kluckhohn (2005) as cited in Omoegun *et al.* (2009) maintained that no society is healthy, creative or strong unless that society has a set of common values that give meaning and purpose to group life. Values are principles, fundamental convictions, ideas, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action (Halstead & Taylor, 1996). Values are strong socio-cultural elements that drive and direct a society. Values system according to Okolo (1993) is seen in the behaviours of people. Values system reflects to how people think and apply to the ways people think (Nwabuisi, 2000). The values of any given society are developed and passed down from one generation to another.

The chief socializing agents are the family, school, radio, television and peers (Nwabuisi, 2000), and individuals can be socialized into any societal values through these agents. Nigerian society is a microcosm of the world with many values system. The Nigerian traditional values system before colonialism was outlined by Ella (1992) as respect for elders, chastity among women folk, dignity of labour, patriotism to one's community, courage and self reliance. In the same vein, Nwabuisi (2000) maintained that the dominant traditional values include love and promotion for family and family name, filial piety, honour and respect not for parents alone but also to elders.

Unfortunately, when the white-men came to Nigeria with their government, trade, religion, language, culture and values, Nigerians progressively imbibed the white-men's way of life and values (Nwabuisi, 2000). Western values had both negative and positive effects on the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of Nigerians. In Nigeria, the core traditional values have been debased at the modern era. Debase, according to Hornby (1995), means to lower the quality, status, or value of something, somebody, and oneself. In this paper, the definition of debased values system is anchored on Halstead and Taylor's (1996) definition of value, and it means lowering the quality and status of the principles, fundamental convictions,

ideas, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action.

According to Okpilike (2010), in response to the basic values cherished in Nigerian society, recommended for inclusion in the secondary school curriculum the following values; honesty (rejection of fraud, cheating, bribery and corruption, truthfulness, fairplay and sincerity); regards for the interest of others manifested in tolerance, good neighbourliness, humanness, courtesy, and sportsmanship; justice (practice in fairness in one's personal dealings with others, the equitable distribution of social amenities, goods and services and the equitable settlements of dispute in and outside of the law courts); discipline (habits of self control, moderation, modesty and respect for legitimate authority); right attitude to work (punctuality and regularity, devotion to duty, service, co-operation and dignity of labour); courage (physical courage, moral and spiritual courage), and national consciousness, patriotism, sense of belonging, service to the nation, loyalty, unity and communalism.

The debased values of most Nigerians in the modern era, according to Nwabuisi (2000), include keeping African time, jealous and witch hunting of colleagues, excessive quest for material possession, and apparent worship of money, unpatriotism, egocentrism, sociocentrism, tribalism, ethnocentrism and ethnicity. The debased values system of any nation affects its sports development in one way or the other at the local, state, national or international levels. This is why the focus of the paper is to highlight the implications of some of the Nigeria's debased values system on sports development.

2. Concept of Sports and Sports Development

Sports perform social, cultural, economic and political functions in every society. Orunaboka and Elendu (2009) viewed sport as any highly organized physical activity, which has its equipment, definite boundaries and rules made by a professional body. Sport refers to any physical activity that is highly organized within definite boundaries of a standard facility, with its equipment and specified official rules and regulations made by a professional body which every participant must adhere to. Sports development is a multi-dimensional concept. It refers to a positive improvement and change in the status of sports facilities and equipment, sports organization and administration, welfare of sports personnel, officiating officials, athletes, spectators, and fans irrespective of one's sex, age, religion, race, ethnicity, and economic status, to the realization of sports goals in a given society. Sports development requires the coordination of material and human resources to ensure a safe environment for all citizens to participate and enjoy sports either for recreational or competitive purposes.

Sports development in relation to sports facilities, supplies and equipment entails the construction of new sports facilities, and maintenance of the existing sports facilities, supplies and equipment, and purchase of new sports supplies and equipment in line with international standards and guidelines.

Sports development in relation to sports organization and administration involves positive improvement in the number of sports participants for either competitions or recreation. For competition, it requires ensuring increase in the number of competitions, increase in number of competitors, and ensuring that the competitions are conducted in line with the stipulated official rules governing each sport. It involves ensuring a level playing ground for all sports participants irrespective of sex, age, religion, race, ethnicity, and economic class.

Sports development in relation to athletes, coaches and officiating officials involves positive improvement in their welfare, payment of salaries and allowances, proper nutrition, provision of security, accommodation, and medical attention. Sports development in relation to spectators and fans requires making provision for their enjoyment of sports with proper safety and security, crowd control, sitting arrangements and zero incidence of violence at sports venue.

3. Concept of Values

Okpilike (2010) viewed values are ones principles or standards, ones judgement of what is valuable and important to life. According to Hill (2004), values are the priorities individuals and societies attach to certain beliefs, experiences and objects, in deciding how they shall live and what they shall treasure. Gilbert and Hoeffler (1996) categorized values into aesthetic values, economic values, intellectual values, political values, environmental values, and moral values. According to them, the aesthetic values are related to ideas and concepts such as beauty and symmetry; economic values to efficiency and productivity; intellectual values to truth and clarity; political values to justice and freedom; environmental values to ecological

harmony and sustainability; moral values to ideas and concepts of right actions towards other people such as respect, care, and integrity.

4. Nigerian Traditional Values System before Colonialism

Before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria, Nigerians had their values. Nigerians in the past era before the advent of colonialism, among other things attach great importance to family name (Ella, 1993). Every Nigerian will work assiduously to promote his or her family name and do everything possible to avoid soiling the image of the family and it is the family that forms the inalienable base to Nigerians. Truthfulness and honesty were prized very high. Love and promotion for family and family name, filial piety, honour and respect not for parents alone but also to elders (Nwabuisi, 2000) were the Nigerian traditional values system. Indecent acts such as stealing, dishonesty and moral laxity were abhorrent to Nigerians of old. In each community, strict laws guide the people against infringing on any of these highly held values.

Nigerians had great respect for the sanctity of life. Human life was held in a very great esteem. A violation of human life in any way was considered the greatest crime anyone could commit. Life to a traditional Nigerian was the greatest gift from God and therefore should not be interfered with by anyone (Nwabuisi, 2000). The Nigerian traditional values system as highlighted by Ella (1993) include respect for elders, chastity among women folk, dignity of labour, patriotism to one's community, courage and self reliance. Before the coming of the missionaries, children were taught and encouraged to respect their parents and elders, assist them in fetching water, firewood and other domestic works. Any child who disrespects any of his or her elder irrespective of the gap in age or seniority is seriously punished by the community.

5. Aspects of Nigeria's Debased Values and Sports Development in Modern Era

Some of the areas of Nigeria's debased values include cheating and falsification of age; lack of time consciousness (African time); excessive quest for materialism and worship of money; unpatriotism, ethno-tribalistic sentiments and inclination; over-dependency on foreign goods, products and service delivery; examination malpractice, and who do one know and mediocrity syndrome.

5.1 Cheating and Falsification of Age

Swearing and use of court affidavit as official and legal document have aided falsification of age by most Nigerians including sports participants. Cheating and falsification of age have been synonymous with Nigeria's moral decadence such that Nigeria was once banned for some years from participating in under-age tournaments (Adegoju, 2003). In the same vein Ngwodo (2007) reported that the perennial syndrome of age cheating which continues to dog age-grade football in African countries cast a pall over the golden eaglets. In 1989, Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) placed a two year ban on Nigeria from participating in FIFA age-grade tournaments and also withdrew the country's right to host the 1991 World Youth Championship. Ngwodo further maintained that the infraction for which Nigeria was banned was the alleged falsification of the ages of three players, Andrew Uwe, Samson Siasia, and Dahiru Sadi. The trio had featured for Nigeria in the U-20 World Cups of Mexico 83 and Moscow 85 and had altered their ages to participate in the Seoul 88 Olympics. According to him, age cheats are costing Nigeria future victories in world football. Many Nigerian U-17 football players were dropped for the Nigeria 2009 U-17 FIFA World Cup on the grounds of over-age. Nigeria's fielding of over-age athletes for any age category of sports programme is embarrassing when there are many athletes at the grassroot level yet untapped. Fielding over-age athletes does not speak well of a nation's sports development, as it exposes the inexistence of sports developmental programmes of the country.

5.2 Lack of Time Consciousness (African time)

Lack of time consciousness popularly known as "African time" as used by most Nigerians is the tendency to be relaxed, show indifferent attitude towards time and failure to start events or arrive at events or programmes at their scheduled time. It is the acceptance that nothing will start at the absolute time indicated on the schedule (Harshman, 2011). Often times, athletic teams in Nigeria have been worked over for coming late for a competition. Sports competitions that are slated for 4 O'clock in the evening sometimes start behind schedule and spectators do not arrive before the announced or fixed time due to the

average Nigerian mentality of "African time" meaning that the game will not start at exactly 4 O'clock in the evening.

5.3 Excessive Quest for Materialism and Worship of Money

According to Nwabuisi (2000), money is capable of buying anything and everything and everything else is a means of obtaining money including human life. Okolo (1993) noted that Nigerians are largely drawn to things of immediate material gain, advantage or pleasure. She further noted that an average Nigerian strongly believes that money is almighty and can achieve anything and everything. There has been much emphasis on educational certificates as a basis for integration and survival in the society. This has led to high prevalence of examination malpractice. Nigeria's over-emphasis on educational certificates does not encourage skill development programmes outside educational sector and individuals who may not be interested in going for university education. Everyone wants to get the certificate by all means including examination malpractice. This excess quest for materialism often exposes sports administrators to misappropriation or embezzlement of sports fund thereby retarding the growth and development of sports in the country. Some sports equipment are vandalized by Nigerians thereby leaving the athletes with little or nothing to train with for competitions. Lack of these sports equipment due to vandalization mar the effective organization and administration sports competitions.

5.4 Unpatriotism

Nwabuisi (2000) stated that Nigerians are very unpatriotic. Most Nigerian elite athletes especially football players are more patriotic, dedicated, and committed when it comes to playing for their foreign football clubs than playing for their country in international competitions. The unpatriotism of most Nigerians could be seen in sports spectatorship and fanship, where most Nigerians support English Premier Leagues or clubs (Chelsea FC, Manchester United FC, Barcelona FC, Arsenal FC, etc) than Nigerian leagues or clubs like Enyimba FC, Dolphin FC, Sharks FC, Sunshine Stars FC, Kano Pillars FC, etc.). Stadia are always close to being empty when Nigerian football clubs are playing with little publicity.

5.5 Ethno-tribalistic Sentiments and Inclination

Okolo (1993) stated that a Nigerian in position of power or who has some material advantage usually means a material life-line to his families, relatives, or friends. The roots of Nigeria's unpatriotism can be traced to ethnocentrism and ethno-nationalism which account for the development of Nigeria's gross neglect for merit and equity which are reflected in "appointment to offices, promotions, provision of infrastructure and general development" (Nwabuisi, 2000). Most Nigerians are still interested in the ethnic group, tribe or religion of who becomes the sports minister, sports commissioner, sports association president than on the capability of the individual to service delivery. With emphasis on tribe and ethnicity, unqualified person may assume sports positions even when it is clear that they are not fit for such position. The appointment of sports leaders based on ethnicity or tribe has a lot of negative implications on sports development in Nigeria.

5.6 Over-dependency on Foreign Goods, Products and Service Delivery

Most Nigerians prefer to patronize products that are made outside the country. This has equally been transferred to preference of foreign manpower to Millions of Nigerians in service delivery. Nigerians prefer sports goods like canvas, jerseys, and other supplies made in other continents and countries especially Asia and United States than the ones made in Nigeria. This negative attitude does not encourage the Nigeria's sports supplies and equipment manufacturing industries. Foreign coaches are preferred to "local coaches" to take Nigerian sports teams especially Nigerian football team, the Super Eagles to World competitions. This over-dependency on foreign coaches has not given Nigerian coaches adequate opportunities to develop their coaching careers. An example is the Super Eagle Coach, Shaibu Amodu whose appointment was terminated for fear by some Nigerians that he may not deliver Nigeria at the South Africa 2010 World Cup, thereby leading to the appointment of a foreign coach, the former Sweden Coach, Lars Lagerback who could not equally deliver Super Eagles at the World Cup.

5.7 Examination Malpractice

Nigeria's educational system has suffered terribly from the pangs of her debased value system as seen day by day in examination malpractice (Adegoju, 2007). He further expressed that offering and taking of bribes by candidates and examination officials respectively in both internal and external examinations have aided examination malpractice. Examination malpractice in Nigerian educational system has far reaching implications in all sectors of the society including sports. This is because of the fact that the products of the educational system are future leaders including sports leaders. When these individuals who passed out of the educational system through examination malpractices secure sports leadership position, they will be ineffective and inefficient in sports administration and development in Nigeria.

5.8 Who do One know and Mediocrity Syndrome

Meritocracy has almost been sacrificed to mediocrity because of "who one knows" popularly known in Nigerian context as "IM". The access to certain facilities, positions and services have been associated with who one knows in the society irrespective of his or her qualifications. If one is looking for appointment, it is no longer surprising that some employers in Nigeria expect and respect complimentary cards of personalities such as political leaders and wealthy individuals. This encourages mediocrity which affects the sectors of the society including sports. Some sports administrators at the local, state and national levels are appointed based on who they know in the society. The use of mediocres in sports industry affects sports administration and development in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

The behaviours and actions of individuals in any nation such as Nigeria are greatly influenced by their values system. These values have either positive or negative effects on the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of the society. Some of the traditional Nigeria's values system have debased in the modern era. The Nigeria's debased values are exemplified in cheating and falsification of age, over-dependency on foreign goods, products and service delivery, unpatriotism, ethno-tribalistic sentiments and inclination, lack of time consciousness, excessive quest for materialism and worship of money, who do one know and mediocrity syndrome, among others. The Nigeria's debased values system is not good for the development of sports at the local, state, national, and international levels.

7. Recommendations

In order to avert the ugly implications of the debased values system on national development especially sports development, it was recommended that:

1. National Orientation Agency should embark on re-orientation campaign and enlightenment on the effect of debased values on national and sports development.
2. Anti-graft agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should arrest and prosecute sports leaders who embezzle sports funds.
3. Nigerian primary, secondary and tertiary education should strengthen and emphasize moral and proper value education in their curriculum. Time consciousness should be instilled into the students and pupils. All stakeholders of the educational system should continuously discourage examination malpractice among students.
4. Ministry of culture and tourism in collaboration with ministries of education, sports, and information should embark on character changing programmes, workshops, seminars and symposia for different social classes of individuals in the society.
5. Only Nigerians with good values should be recognized and presented with national honours.
6. Students should be allowed to form moral clubs with the guidance and supervision of teachers with sound moral life and integrity.
7. There should be inter-sectoral collaborations with all stakeholders (government ministries, law makers, parents, law enforcement agencies, mass media, entertainment industry, teachers, religious leaders, students, politicians, sports administrators, etc) to re-orientate Nigerians on proper values.
8. Only detribalized Nigerians should be elected and appointed into leadership positions. Leaders should be people with high integrity and moral conduct.
9. Mediocrity should be discouraged by all Nigerians in every facet of the society including sports. Appointments should be based strictly on merit.

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