



NIGERIAN FOOTBALL SYSTEM: EXAMINING MACRO-LEVEL PRACTICES AGAINST A GLOBAL MODEL FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF MASS AND ELITE SPORT

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the macro-level football management practices in Nigeria giving references to best international practices with a goal to determining areas for improvement. A questionnaire was developed for the following elements of the model: Partnerships with supporting agencies, balanced and integrated funding and structures of mass and elite sport. Survey questions were validated by six experts including academicians, executives from sport governing bodies, football coaches and administrators. To determine the areas for improvement, the copies of questionnaire were completed by 116 coaches. Possible advancements were identified through semi-structured discussions with 10 football administrators and experts. Results suggested possible enhancements at macro level (socio-economic, cultural, legislative and organizational). Identified were best international macro football management practices. Detailed were ways to improve partnerships with supporting agencies and balanced and integrated funding and structures of mass and elite sport, therefore improving national health, education, crime control and social harmony in Nigeria.

Keywords: Football, High performance, Mass participation, Nigeria, Sport development

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INTRODUCTION

There is a constructive relationship between sports participation and health (Mutrie and Biddle, 1995). Sports serve to improve the quality of health to all participants (Kahn, Ramsey, Brownson, Heath, Howze, Powell & Corso 2002).

Football participation for two to three hours per week is enough to improve metabolic, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal adaptations, regardless of gender or age, as well as help participants develop an enhanced level of social interaction (ScienceDaily, 2010) and promotes social identity through the gathering that it provides. Football could be used to fight social vices (Alegi, 2010).

In Nigeria, there has been an increase in football participation at the grassroots level primarily due to the emerging efforts of determined individuals, governments and corporations. For instance, the Coca-Cola grassroots sport initiative had attracted 100,000 kids to take part in the football competition. The 2017 tournament included 5,000 schools, increasing from 3,000 schools in 2016 (Thisdaylive, 2017). The Nigeria football federation, in partnership with Zenith Bank, had also introduced the U-13 and U-15 football tournament from 2016, with entries from across the country (Ogungbe, 2017). These initiatives have helped to increase mass participation in football, but opportunities to further advance football at the grassroots level in Nigeria still exist.

Participation in various sports, as a foundation for football development, is encouraged through physical education (PE) requirements in schools, but lack of sport facilities has ensured that the PE programmes are not maximized (Alla and Ajibua, 2012). There are disadvantages with regards to the sizes and compositions of classes in most of the Nigerian public schools which is detrimental to the PE programmes. There are often large age differences within classes in the public schools which makes the intended outcome of PE activities in such schools trickier to achieve. A situation whereby some 16-year-old kids are sharing the same primary classes with 9-year-old kids rather gives an unfair competitive advantage to the older students and a discouragement to younger kids which may result in total lack of interest in competing or sports in general from the disadvantaged children.

Sport programmes relies heavily on leadership from physical education teachers or coaches but more often, the expertise to teach those activities are lacking as there are few grassroots specifically trained coaches in Nigeria. Considering the difference between coaching adults and children (Richardson, 2015), the only institution which trains football coaches in Nigeria is the National Institute for Sport which offers no separate coaching training emphasizing on grassroots training. All the coaches are trained the same way with emphasis on high performance football (Alla, Ajibua, & Amasiatu, 2015). So many kids have dropped out of training due to the inability of coaches to treat them as kids, rather instructing the classes with iron fists (Ojo, 2015).

Most clubs in Nigeria play football in a half empty stadium, very few clubs can average 15,000 fans per game (Adewale, 2016). Innovative fan activities, as suggested in this study, are

particularly important in the growing power of passive unhealthy viewership and digital media technologies, considering how football clubs are appropriating social media and web technologies in Nigeria (Ojo, 2018). The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) through the League Management Company (LMC) is expected to influence media coverage and popularity of football to increase support from the society. The best efforts so far had been the coverage of football league in Nigeria by super sports which ensured that the Nigerian Football League was well broadcasted and in different countries in Africa. With the termination of the contract by super sports, the National Television Authority (NTA) has been awarded the broadcasting right but unfortunately, the NTA has not been able to provide viewers with a decent coverage as a result of poor equipment and personnel (Adewuyi, 2018).

One of the challenges that faces football management in Nigeria is lack of conceptual and practical frameworks focused on maximizing the number of participants and providing for their gradual progression to the highest desired level of performance (Green, 2005). While the Nigerian objectives aimed at the systematic advancement of sport have been stated by the national sports development policy of 1989 and vision 2010 Sports Development Initiative (Shehu, 1995), corresponding actions have not fully been implemented. The Nigerian Vision 2010 sport group final report of 1997 (Amuchie, 2002) concluded that inconsistency, instability, and unclear philosophy of policies have been the bane of sports in Nigeria. This perhaps explains the gap between intended sports development goals and actual achievements.

The objective of this research is to assess the macro-level practices of football management in Nigeria against a global model for integrated development of mass and high-performance sport (Smolianov and Zakus 2008, 2009a, 2009b). By referencing domestic and global practices we will answer the research question: What might be implemented as “best macro-level football practice” across Nigeria for elite athlete preparation as well as mass participation structures, processes, and programmes (Sparvero, Chalip and Green, 2008). The ultimate goals are to further advance Nigeria’s international football performance and improve the wellbeing of the Nigerian society through football.

Smolianov and Zakus (2008) built the model of integrated elite and mass sport development from past research which formed the foundation for a questionnaire and interviews for Nigerian football coaches and administrators to generate a snapshot of perceptions of the current sport system and possibilities for its further development. Between 2001 and 2015, several studies from different scholars have examined the factors that influence the sports performances of many countries. These studies strived to show the mix of elements for successful high-performance athlete development by comparing the high-performance sports policies of various countries. Some of the studies were conducted for particular sports, while others focused on overall sports. These studies on factors that influence the sports performances of various countries include works by Oakley & Green (2001). Green & Houlihan (2005), Digel, Burk, & Fahrner, (2006), Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nødland, & Rommetveldt (2007), De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, Van Bottenburg, & De Knop (2008a), Houlihan & Green (2008), De

Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg, Shibli & Bingham (2009b), Andersen & Roglan (2012) and De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, & Van Bottenburg (2015).

Oakley & Green (2001) had studied the elite system of sports development in six countries. The selected countries were Spain, the UK, France, Australia, Canada, and the USA. The research had utilized the review of secondary sources, study visits, and interviews for data collection. The research focus was on the role of different agencies for the support of sports development, administration, identification, and monitoring of athletes, sports services, programs, facilities, culture, planning, funding, and lifestyle support. The study had deliberated the applicability of a standardized elite sports development model. Though the studies were inclusive of all sports, the selection criteria for the study were countries with only relatively large populations in a developed western democracy which excluded developing countries.

Green and Houlihan (2005) had studied the process of changes in elite sport policy in three sports (athletics and yachting swimming) and three nations (Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom). The research had examined the problems faced by the government in establishing an elite sport development infrastructure covering facilities, coaching, sports science athletes' competition, support for full-time athletes, coaching, sport science, medical support, competition, and availability of opportunities for the athletes. One of the drawbacks of the study is that it was based only on three sports.

The study by Digel et al. (2006) had used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis in comparing elite sports systems of track and field, Swimming, and Volleyball athletes. These studies were carried out in eight different countries with a focus on resources, sponsorship, politics, education, competition, talent search, science, and mass media. The selection criteria for those countries were countries with a long tradition and preferential treatment for Olympic sports. The criteria had also ruled out many countries for selection on the research project.

Bergsgard et al. (2007) address the growing interest in processes of changes in policies by comparing sport policies in developed countries. The study builds on the emergent interest in the study of sport policies and processes of policy changes by providing a hypothetical analysis of the sports systems in four developed countries, which includes Norway, Canada, Germany, and England. Hence these countries share some socio-economic and sports-related characteristics, and the countries were selected to facilitate the exploration of the importance of variables. The studies also include the structure and values of mass participation and high-performance sport and the role of the voluntary sector. A drawback of this study is that it considered only countries that were developed and with similar social-economic characteristics.

According to Houlihan & Green (2008), there is still a lot of research to be done despite the apparent evidence from past researchers on the benefits of elite sports participation to the public as it is consistently highlighted by those benefits. These claims are backed up by massive government investments for elite sports development by most developed countries. Most times, the massive investments are to the detriment of other sports policy objectives that would have increased the general levels of sports participation. The research by Houlihan & Green (2008)

focuses on the identification and development of elite sporting talent, especially in Olympic sports, as well as the historical, political, and organizational context of talent identification and development. Two notable drawbacks for this research are that the research focuses on finding and developing high-performance sporting talent only in Olympic sports and specific countries, which include China, Japan, Singapore, Germany, France, and Poland. There was no developing country involved in this research.

Andersen & Roglan (2012) explore the differences between elite Nordic sports and how such differences have come about since the Second World War and how they influence the way today's challenges are dealt with in the different Nordic countries (De Bosscher et al., 2008; 2009a and 2015). There has been massive competition between nations striving to gain dominance at an international stage; as a result of the quest for sports success, governments are increasing their expenditure on elite sports. Some countries have shown that their increased funding of elite sports has brought about massive achievements and successes in international competitions, especially at the Olympics. However, there are no clear indicators of the specific factors that bring about immediate impacts on international sports success. There are no specific models or benchmarks for comparing the expenditures of countries to determine whether a country is spending below the required amount needed to achieve success. This makes it difficult to determine the suitable investment that is needed to bring international sports success. So how can countries increase their chances of winning medals on an international stage? In De Bosscher et al. (2008; 2009; 2015), an international group of researchers had teamed up to develop methods, theories, and a model on the Sports Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS). They compared and contrasted policies of the elite sport of 15 nations that have brought successes for those countries in the Olympic Games. The research is so far the most extensive study of national elite sport policies that have ever been conducted. The SPLISS is based on a theoretical framework of nine pillars. These nine factors, along with the notions of policy inputs (financial resources), policy-throughputs (processes) and outputs (results during international competitions such as medals, medal points, number of elite athletes qualifying etc.) form the basis of the SPLISS analytical framework.

In comparison to all the studies that have been conducted on elite sport policies, only two studies were focused on overall sports, and they include Oakley and Green (2001) and De Bosscher et al. (2008; 2009; 2015). However, both studies were limited to developed western democracies and had excluded all African countries. De Bosscher et al. had stated, "there is no one size fits all" approach that applies to all nations (De Bosscher et al. 2015). For Nigerian football development, De Bosscher et al. wrote, "For the suitability of a football development model in Nigeria, some critical theoretical thinking is needed and combining different models is probably the best way to get a broader understanding" (De Bosscher et al. 2018). The SPLISS model alone may not apply to Nigerian football or other developing countries due to the limitations of the SPLISS model such as the exclusion of mass sports participation, inclusiveness of elite athletes, macro-level elements of sports delivery and geographical locations, which are all addressed by the Smolianov and Zakus model that is used in this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical framework builds on the scholarship of Bravo, Orejan, Vélez, and López (2012), De Bosscher and associates (2006, Digel (2005), Fetisov (2005), Platonov (2010) and Smolianov & Zakus (2008; 2009) who discussed the foundational role of broad sport participation leading to the development of elite athletic performances. A key idea in this process of developing participants from recreation to high performance (HP) involves macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of policy and support (see Figure 1) as adapted from Green and Houlihan (2005), De Bosscher et al. (2006) and De Bosscher, Shibli, Van Bottenburg, De Knop and Truyens (2010). Presently, macro-level elements refer to socio-economic, cultural, legislative and organizational support for a national sport system by the whole society. The meso-level includes infrastructures, personnel and services enabling delivery of sport policy. The micro-level comprises of processes, operations and methodologies for development of individual athletes. This research focuses on the macro-level elements of football development. However, HP elements overlap at different levels (De Bosscher et al., 2006) supporting and influencing each other.

When HP (programmes preparing athletes for national and international televised competitions) and recreational sport [physical education (PE), recreation and fitness programmes] are connected, goals of supporting agencies, ranging from fitness to competitive success and commercial objectives, can be achieved (Fetisov, 2005; Smolianov & Zakus, 2008, 2009). The developed model suggests a globally applicable theory of how to advance HP sport and benefit mass participation. However, significant challenges face sport developers due to insufficient conceptual and practical frameworks resulting in poorly functioning sport systems (Green, 2005).

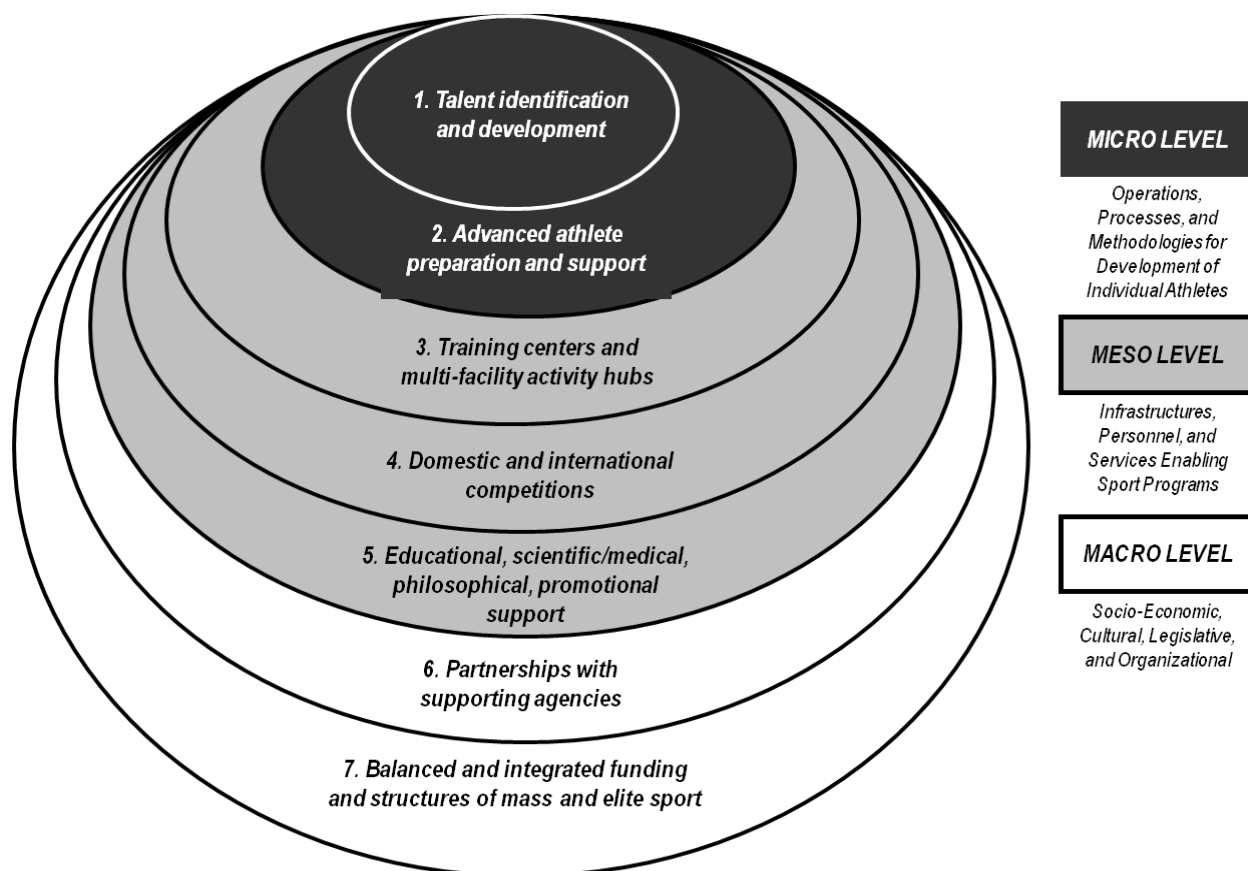


Figure 1: Ideal-type Model of Integrated High Performance and Mass Sport Development
Source: Smolianov and Zakus (2008)

If HP and recreational sport are connected on the above points of development, they can reach goals of supporting agencies including: commercial objectives; positive levels of health and fitness; the various elements of social capital and community development; success in major global competitions; and, national pride (Smolianov & Zakus, 2008; Smolianov et al., 2014).

The ideal-type model used in this study has contributed to academic and professional knowledge by providing a vision of developing not only elite sport analyzed by previous models, but also connected with it systems of mass participation and gradual progression to HP for all which are increasingly attempted around the world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper aims to identify the needs of the Nigerian football to propel them towards international standards by referencing best macro-element practices which consist of operations, processes, and methodologies for development of individual athletes with the aim to determining areas for improvement in Nigerian football, national health, education and crime control. The exploration was based on the model of integrated high performance and mass sport development

and focuses on the practices of elements in the macro (Partnerships with supporting agencies and balanced and integrated funding and structures of mass and elite sport) level. To explore and identify the needs, this study utilizes a mix research method to provide strengths that balance the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Three modes of data collection were conducted during this study, namely (1) questionnaire, (2) semi-structured interviews and (3) analysis of documents.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Previous theoretical framework and a comprehensive literature review were used for the development of a questionnaire. The adopted questionnaire was developed to measure the management practices of sports based on the model of integrated high performance and mass sport development to identify the needs of a sport ecosystem. The questionnaire was validated by six international experts including academicians, executives from sport governing bodies, administrators and coaches who have previously played football and have coached to a World Cup level at various FIFA youth categories.

In distributing the questionnaire, stratified sampling technique was used. Copies of questionnaire were delivered in person to football coaches from six key geopolitical zones of Nigeria - North Central: Benue State; North East: Gombe State; North West: Kaduna State; South East: Enugu State; South-South: Cross River State; South West: Lagos State; an average of 166 coaches per zone had provided us with data saturation. In this research, both stratified sampling (questionnaire) and purposive sampling techniques (Administrators' interviews) were used, as ignorance/unawareness about organizational aspects among coaches and administrators is common (Digel, 2006; Smolianov et al., 2014). In administering the questionnaire, we stratified the sample, ensuring that we had respondents from across key regions and coaching levels. We were after respondents who are aware and informed about the sophisticated sport management and development practices we were investigating; therefore, our low response rate of 120 respondents is typical as the questionnaire was responded to by only those who are believed to be aware/informed of such practices. Other works that have used the same model with small sample sizes include Carney, Smolianov & Zakus (2012), Smolianov, Gallo & Naylor (2014), Smolianov, Zakus & Gallo (2014), Smolianov, Bravo, Vozniak & Komova (2014), Smith, &, Smolianov (2016), Smolianov, Schoen, Norberg, Smith & Calpino (2018), Smolianov & Musunsa (2018), Kaka'an, Smolianov, Lian, Dion & Schoen (2018), Hopkinson, Smolianov, Dion, Schoen, Norberg, & Boucher (2018), Kaka'an, Amulum, Okokon (2019), Kaka'an, Smolianov, Lian, Dion, Schoen, Norberg (2019) among several other works.

Inclusion criteria for coaches' survey were:

1. Coaches that could speak, read and write fluently in English
2. The coaches must be more than 18 years of age
3. Their nationality must be Nigerian
4. They must have more than 1-year coaching experience.

Inclusion criteria for administrators' interview include:

1. Their nationality must be Nigerian
2. Administrators that can communicate fluently in oral and written English
3. The administrators must have more than 10-year experience in football administration.

Survey instructions asked respondents to think about Nigerian football's current systems and structures and to indicate how often the practices were evident, from 'never' (1) to 'always' (5) on a five-point Likert-type scale. They were also asked to elaborate, through written comments on the elements. The questionnaires were collected for analysis using an Excel software.

Cronbach's alpha analysis was conducted to measure the internal reliability of the questionnaire from 120 responses. The total inventory was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.92$, 54 items) confirming similar reliability levels of the model's survey questions indicated by previous studies (Zeeuw et al., 2017).

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The aim of conducting a semi-structured interview was to combine a pre-determined set of open-ended questions prompting discussion to provide uniformity and opportunity to explore particular themes while seeking valuable information from context of respondents' experiences. Using purposive sampling technique (not based on zoning but on expertise, experience and participation), 10 football administrators were selected as we were after respondents that were experienced and informed about the sophisticated sport management and development practices we were investigating. Interviews were conducted with 10 Nigerian football administrators and experts including three ex-Nigerian national team coaches that participated at various youth World Cups, a state sports council director, a state government football marketing consultant, a Nigerian FIFA badged assistant referee, an international football journalist and football commentator veteran of over 20 years, a Nigerian professional league football club chairman, and a university professor in sport management and special adviser to the Nigerian government on sports. Also interviewed was the former director of grassroots sports development department and former general director of the now-defunct Nigerian National Sports Commission and a former board member of the Nigerian Football League Management Company.

Through purposive sampling, the selected administrators and experts were shown the coaches' survey results and asked to comment on statements/practices which received high and low scores, particularly on how to increase the scores of practices which coaches indicated to be performed 'rarely' and 'never'. The interviews were based on the seven elements of the Smolianov and Zakus model.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis was done on Nigeria Football Federation's website, newspaper articles, literature review of Nigerian football management and administration and policies.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Inductive coding techniques were followed by researcher interviews and discussions which lead to refinement of themes. The coding process was used to convert the qualitative data to quantitative data for interpretation. Triangulation of the findings was achieved by comparing the three types of data (survey, interview and literature/documents).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaires were delivered to 120 coaches. This resulted in 102 fully completed copies of questionnaire indicating a response rate of 85%. 11% were female, 89% male (a strong indication of the need to attract more females to coaching). The sample represents Nigerian football coaches from different ethnic groups; 22% were Hausa-Fulani, 20% were Igbo, 21% were Yoruba and 37% did not indicate their ethnicity. Majority of the coaches (60%) were fulltime paid coaches who were employed either by the government or various football clubs in Nigeria; 25% were part-time coaches and 15% were volunteer coaches who were mostly involved with grassroots. The analysis shows that most sampled coaches worked with players at colleges, universities and professional clubs. This means that respondents from the survey were well informed about practices and dynamics of mass and elite football systems.

Most of the surveyed coaches in Nigeria had coaching training. However, 9% of the respondents had no identified coaching qualification. That implies that 91% of the surveyed coaches were certified. About nine percent of the coaches indicated to have the highest level of football/soccer qualification/certificate.

Most (64%) of the responding Nigerian coaches were involved with HP athletes, 29% with intermediate and 7% with beginner level participants. Survey responses are presented as both average scores and aggregated percentages of perceived current practices. Aggregated percentages of responses allow appreciation of the distribution of coach responses.

Survey Results that Guided the Responses of the Football Administrators Based on the Macro Level Elements of Nigerian Football

Table 1: Partnerships with Supporting Agencies

Desired Practices	Distribution of Responses			
	Average Score	Negative Perceptions* (%)	Neutral Perceptions* (%)	Positive Perceptions* (%)
1. Support for football development is adequate from various levels of government.	2.0	69	20	11
2. Sufficient help is obtained from Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and the National Institute for Sports (NIS) which provides coaching education and certification.	2.3	74	13	13
3. Role of clubs/community programmes in football development is sound/strong.	2.5	66	19	15
4. Football is well supported by educational sector (e.g., schools, colleges, universities)	4.3	8	15	77
5. Cooperation with agencies outside of sport industry (e.g., medical, scientific, military, philanthropic and sponsoring organizations, lotteries) is in place	2.9	24	66	10
6. Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) influences media coverage and popularity of football to increase support from the society	4.2	9	20	71
Across all items in element (N=102)	3.0	42	25	33

*Note. Possible scores on questions range from 1 to 5. Negative Perceptions is an aggregation of '1 = never' and '2 = rarely' responses. Neutral Perceptions is an aggregation of '3 = sometimes' and 'Do not know' responses. Positive Perceptions is an aggregation of '4 = often' and '5 = always' responses.

Table 1 indicates 33% positive and 42% negative views on “Partnerships with Supporting Agencies”. Some of the challenges revealed through the scores in Table 1 and stressed in open responses include corruption, lack of administrators training, lack of support from the private sector, no legislative policy to compare corporate sponsorship and lack of transparency on the part of the administrators. Also, 35% percent of the open responses were related to a lack of training for football administrators, 30 percent indicated lack of corporate sponsorship.

Items 1, 2 and 3 had more negative responses indicating the need to improve cooperation with supporting agencies and community programmes for further football development. In particular, support for football at various levels of government should be stronger according to 69% of coaches. 9 coaches stressed again in their open comments that football participation requires a greater financial contribution.

An Administrator speculated that:

“Government is trying but they can only do so much because we have the government funding football every year but the clubs don’t make efforts to be independent” (Administrator B, Male, North Central: Benue State).

One of the administrators had affirmed that

“the NFF is trying as we are having more coverage in the league now than before, so credit must go to them (Administrator F, Male, North East: Gombe State).

Respondents had agreed that football is well supported by educational sector with 77% score, compared with only 29% of US respondents. A majority (71%) also had positive view that Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) influences media coverage and popularity of football while 74% of the respondents had a negative view that sufficient help is obtained from Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and the National Institute for Sports (NIS) which provides coaching education and certification.

Table 2: Summary of Barriers Holding Back the Advancement of Partnerships with Supporting Agencies in Nigerian Football

Barriers holding back advancement of partnerships with supporting agencies in Nigerian Football	Frequency	%
Too much reliance on government to fund sports	2	40
Sports officials responsible for collaborations between different agencies don’t have the knowledge or knowhow to carry on such a task	2	40
There are few companies willing to invest in sports as part of their CSR	1	20
Total	5	100

According to responses from football administrators, the barriers holding back the advancement of Nigeria football in partnerships with supporting agencies include: limited companies willing to invest in sports as part of their CSR, too much reliance on the government to fund sports and football officials responsible for collaborations between different agencies don’t have the knowledge or knowhow to carry on such a task. The system could be better improved by more involvement from corporate organizations to develop sports in communities. Clubs should get more involved with community development services to boost their relationship with the communities and corporate organizations. Tax revenue from sports betting should be reinvested into football development projects.

Table 3: Summary of Recommendations for the Improvement of Partnerships with Supporting Agencies in Nigerian Football

Recommendations for the advancement of partnerships with supporting agencies in Nigerian Football	Frequency	%
More involvement is needed from corporate organizations to develop sports	1	33.33
Clubs should get more involved with community development services to boost their relation with the communities and corporate organizations	1	33.33
Tax revenue from sports betting should be reinvested into football development projects	1	33.33
Total	3	100

Balanced and Integrated Funding and Structures of Mass and Elite Sport

Table 4: Balanced and Integrated Funding and Structures of Mass and Elite Sport

Desired Practices	Distribution of Responses			
	Average Score	Negative Perceptions * (%)	Neutral Perceptions * (%)	Positive Perceptions *
1. Corporate and philanthropic tax incentives provide sufficient support of mass and elite football.	1.9	75	17	8
2. Participation in various sports, as a foundation for football development, is encouraged through physical education requirements.	3.4	14	34	51
3. Sport participation, including football, is rewarded with reduced personal tax.	1.8	76	14	10
4. Football programs service both recreational and high-performance players.	3.0	20	63	17
5. Specialized sport schools similar to Kwara football academy are available and affordable to all talented football players.	2.3	72	21	7
6. A multi-stage system of elite football qualification is integrated with a system of fitness tests for mass participation.	2.4	66	21	13
7. Memberships and other "fees" affordable for all are available in various football clubs.	2.6	51	33	16
8. Football participants are diverse as general population.	4.1	10	15	75
9. The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) in collaboration with the National Institute for Sports (NIS), state sports associations and local government area sports committees demonstrate systematic/strategic management in developing football players on every level.	3.0	25	55	20
10. The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports through the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) is effective in fostering both mass participation and high performance in football.	3.0	22	61	17
11. Football is developed in integration with Olympic and Paralympic sports to achieve sustainable competitive excellence.	4.3	7	11	82
Across all items in element (N=102)	2.8	40	31	29

*Note. Possible scores on questions range from 1 to 5. Negative Perceptions is an aggregation of ‘1 = never’ and ‘2 = rarely’ responses. Neutral Perceptions is an aggregation of ‘3 = sometimes’ and ‘Do not know’ responses. Positive Perceptions is an aggregation of ‘4 = often’ and ‘5 = always’ responses.

As can be seen from Table 4, perceptions regarding “Balanced and Integrated Funding and Structures of Mass and Elite Sport” were divided, with more negative (40%) than positive (29%) responses. Lack of mechanisms stimulating the flow of resources for affordable football programmes is the key issue throughout the element. Some of the challenges within the system in this element are revealed through the scores in Table 4 and stressed in open responses, namely: lack of harmonization of sports programmes, lack of corporate sponsors, lack of facilities, no clear criteria for policy implementation, a poor reward system for players and inadequate staff training. Thirty percent of the open responses were related to a lack of corporate sponsors, 22 percent indicated lack of sport facilities.

An Administrator speculated that:

“Government is trying but they can only do so much because we have the government funding football every year but the clubs don’t make efforts to be independent” (Administrator B, Male, North Central: Benue State).

One of the administrators had affirmed that

“The NFF is trying as we are having more coverage in the league now than before, so credit must go to them. (Administrator F, Male [North East: Gombe State]).

An Administrator 1 confirmed that

“We have people coming from everywhere to play football and that football participation was very diverse” (Administrator I, Male, North West: Kaduna State).

According to the survey, football diversity had 75% of positive perception in Nigeria. A significant 76% of the coaches had a negative perception that sports participation, including football, is rewarded with reduced personal tax. Nigeria could use world’s progressive practices such as in Canada to stimulate sports participation through personal tax incentives.

According to interview respondents, the problem holding back the integrated funding of mass and elite sports in Nigeria includes financial misappropriation by Nigerian football officials, no tax returns on sports goods, and lack of expertise in sports marketing by club officials.

Table 5: Summary of Barriers Holding Back the Integrated Funding of Mass and Elite Sport in Nigerian Football

Barriers holding back advancement of integrated funding of mass and elite sport in Nigerian football?	Frequency	%
There are no tax returns on sports goods	4	57
Financial misappropriation by Nigerian football officials	2	29
Lack of expertise in sports marketing by club officials	1	14
Total	7	100

The system could be improved by promoting specialization in areas such as sports marketing, sponsorship and fundraising. Experts should be involved in helping football clubs and players and this should be made mandatory for all clubs.

Table 6: Summary of Improvement for Integrated Funding of Mass and Elite Sport in Nigerian Football

Recommendation for the improvement of integrated funding of mass and elite sport in Nigerian football?	Frequency	%
There should be specialization in areas such as sports marketing, sponsorship and fundraising	1	50
Experts should be involved in helping football clubs and players and this should be made mandatory for all clubs.	1	50
Total	2	100

According to interview responses, there should be specialization in Nigerian universities in areas such as sports marketing, sponsorship and fundraising. It should be made mandatory for all clubs that management staff should have certain levels of qualification to be eligible for such managerial positions.

DATA TRIANGULATION

In combining the findings from the questionnaire and interview analysis, the research provides the total macro level barriers that are affecting the development of Nigerian football, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Macro-Level Problems Affecting the Development of Nigerian Football

Macro-level Problems affecting the development of Nigerian football	%
Lack of funds	42
Financial misappropriation by administrators and coaches	30.4
Inability to enforce existing rules and regulations on sports development policies	12
Nepotism	6.8
There are no tax returns on sports goods	4.4
Lack of media coverage	2.4
There are few companies willing to invest in sports as part of their CSR	1
Lack of partnership across other sectors	1
Total	100

In analyzing all the macro-level problems affecting the development of football in Nigeria, Lack of funds amounts to 42% of the problems, Financial misappropriation by administrators and coaches has 30%, Inability to enforce existing rules and regulations on sports development policies scored a 12% of the total macro-level problems as indicated in Table 7.

CONCLUSION

There are remarkable achievements and great potentials to further develop football in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's dominance in age-grade international football competitions and local club achievements such as the dominance of Enyimba FC in Africa a few years ago, survey respondents were unsatisfied with the majority of the macro-level football management practices in Nigeria. Survey results showed that at a macro-level, funding is the major problem affecting Nigerian football development. The Nigerian government has been the primary sponsor of sports in Nigeria but an integrated funding system will have a better effect on sports development. Football officials responsible for collaborations between different agencies to ensure adequate funding for sports do not have the knowledge or know-how to carry on such a task. Other problems identified by this research include financial misappropriation by administrators and coaches, inability to enforce existing rules and regulations on sports development policies, nepotism, lack of media coverage and lack of partnership across other sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to implement the best macro-level football management practices across Nigeria for both elite athlete preparation as well as mass participation structures, processes and programmes, this study recommends:

- ✓ A mandatory partnership across the system of sports, education and healthcare: The system could be better improved by adequate staffing, a strong fight against financial misappropriation, more involvement by sponsors for football development, improved professionalism in sports management and improved funding of football development projects by the government. There should be more involvement from corporate organizations to develop sports in communities. Clubs should get more involved with community development services to boost their relationship with the communities and corporate organizations. Tax revenue from sports betting should be reinvested into football development projects.
- ✓ In Nigeria, the ministries of education, health and sport form three separate ministries which could prove a challenge in terms of collaboration within the ministries. The benefits of national and local partnerships for the combined health-focused advancement of sport are proven practices across the world. The Australia's and the Netherlands' sport

systems show that sport can be placed under the federal department of health where health targets are tied to mass participation. In the UK system, there is partnership system across education, health as well as mass and elite sport. In Finland, there is an integrated health and mass sports collaboration across various local and federal agencies. Besides the envisioned partnership between education, sports and health ministries, Nigerian sport governing body could collaborate with agencies outside of sports industry such as medical, scientific, military, philanthropic and sponsoring organizations and lotteries for a progressive sports development plan in Nigeria. The Nigerian authorities could consider practices of several developed sport nations from China, the former USSR and Netherlands as possible options that could help encourage fairer and better use of sport gambling profits. With the emergence of football lottery in Nigeria through companies such as Naijabet, Nigeria could direct the funds from lottery tax to ensure affordable football conditions, instructions and athlete development for all. For example, in the United State of America, Massachusetts State Lottery had paid the Boston Red Sox baseball team \$10.5 million and Boston Celtics basketball team \$1.4 million in 2006–2014, amounts which was expected to help in developing the various sports in Boston and America in general. The methodical integration of these practices to Nigerian football will ensure better funding for the sport and the promotion of professionalism and specialization for better administration of football in Nigeria.

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