



SPORTS
DEVELOPMENT
IN
NIGERIAN
UNIVERSITIES

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ISBN 978-30933-0-0

*Published by
Abesso Raytons Publishing Company.*

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Printed in Nigeria by A.R. Printing Press 967777

This book is published with a grant from Guinness Nigeria PLC as a contribution of Guinness Nigeria PLC towards the Development of Sports in Nigerian Universities.

CHAPTER 2

SPORTS FACILITIES ENGINEERING FOR NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE 90'S: ADMINISTRATIVE APPROACH

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THE PHILOSOPHY:

In a primarily epistemological reaction, Karl (1976) described the University as an institution for the corporate realization of man's determination to know, expressed through self criticism as a training for objectivity. The University does the function through liberal education aimed at unchaining the human mind. It is not a coincidence that the ideology of excellence is the philosophy for the establishment of any university. Today all fertile minds agree that the human organism can function best as mind-body unity. The primary aim of a good education should be mind-body integration through the development of human cognitive and motoric capacities.

This chapter informed by philosophy suggests clear line of policy in Nigerian University education which seems vulnerable to the transcending urge that intellectualism is the absolute reality. The writers view is that a narrow yet sophisticated intellectual pursuit in the universities is merely academic propaganda if the development of psychomotor behaviour is blindly neglected. The premise is that a highly intellectual mind can not function effectively in a slightly decaying body.

THE PROBLEM

No one contests the claim that the university is inherently an academic community. Under the cloak of academic tradition, many conservatives over-shadow other legitimate co-curricular activities. Sports is one of such neglected adjuncts of the University life. Today the University "athletes" face threatening experiences in the campuses. Some of the hostilities include:

- (i) Undefined role of sports participation in students development;
- (ii) Fear of neglect by the University authority in an event of sports injury;
- (iii) Sexual harassment in the case of the female athlete;
- (iv) Lack of co-operation and encouragement from anti-sports lecturers and administrators;
- (v) Fear of missing or failing continuous assessment tests and or examinations.
- (vi) Insufficient coaching schedules and substandard facilities and equipment.

These catalogue of dis-satisfaction explains in part why Nigeria universities can no longer produce athletes of international status; the Ifeajunas, Ogans, Ogunjobis, Afolabis, etc. It is a matter of national concern that about thirty years after independence Nigeria universities, are undermining the role of sports in nationhood.

THE ARGUMENT:

Nigeria is undergoing rapid social, political and economic changes. It is important that a sound sports philosophy be made an integral part of the national culture. A consistent habit in the university system is research and scholarship. Correspondingly the society looks on the universities for her manpower needs. Nigeria expects her universities like the universities in the developed nations to produce the cream of athletes for the country, (Omo-Osagie, 1986).

Today sports have gone beyond being merely recreational. National prestige, social limelight, economic upliftment and political power are strongly associated with modern sports. Nigeria universities can no longer feel complacent with its lethargic attitude towards sports excellence and development.

BLUNT REALITIES:

The youths are the image of a nation's future. No nation can pretend to achieve greatness let alone sustain her greatness if she compromises the development of her youths mentally, culturally and physically. The universities provide the highest concentration of "responsible" youths, the salad of the country's future. The universities have failed the Nigerian nation for not being able to mobilize the youths for international sports stardom.

With no possible exceptions, no Nigerian university has sports facilities adequate enough for international sports fiesta. The type of sports facilities that enabled the University of California (at Los Angeles) to host the 1984 olympic. Umedum and Onyilogwu (1986) confirmed that lack of adequate facilities and equipment constantly rate highest as factors inimical to sports development in Nigeria universities.

Apart from the Departments of Physical and Health Education which are academic arms of the Universities, no Nigerian university has a Department of Sports, Dance and Recreation. This presupposes that functional sports is not considered a worthwhile educational programme.

FACILITY DESIGN:

To restore their sports pride and excellence, the universities must resolve with philosophical tenacity to settle the labyrinth of problems that confront her sports development. A significant segment of the overall spectrum is the provision of worthy outdoor sports edifices.

Today we face a rapidly changing environment. The interplay of social, political, economic and technological forces affect every segment of the society. If the facilities must keep abreast with the fleeting times, good effort must be put in the planning. Facilities engineering is not a random endeavour. The design must be compatible with the sports philosophy and the future long range needs of the universities. The facilities should be designed for flexibility, integration, adaptability, expansibility, accessibility yet reasonably safe and healthful.

CONSULTATION:

It is a common administrative fallacy to be parochial in facilities projections. The foresighted administrator must be broad minded, and consultative. There is no use if facilities outlive in a few years the programme needs. It is expedient to consult architects, landscape experts, consultancy firms, physical educationists, reputable athletes, seasoned sports administrators, Stadium managers, reading professional literature, health personnel and other knowledgeable persons. Study visits to modern sports plants are also recommended while resisting the temptation of carbon copying as each facility is designed to meet unique needs. The benefits of these background contacts are manifest in the elimination of waste and common mistakes in the final design and construction.

Suffice it to say that construction of sports outdoor facilities is not another word for improvisation. Facilities have to be durable, standardized, convertible, functional, qualitative, convenient for use, economically efficient and aesthetically pleasing.

FEATURESCOPE

(a) **LOCATION:** A university sports plant is a relatively permanent structure. There is no wisdom in dumping all the playing stations haphazardly at a location that restricts design options. Ideally facilities should be located on the largest space on campus in case there is the need for programme expansion or multipurpose use.

(b) **DRAINAGE:** Because of soil conditions, topography, torrential and prolonged rain splash in the wet season, particularly in the coastal regions of Southern Nigeria, sites susceptible to flooding are not recommended. If other considerations weigh in strong support then engineered drainage is a possibility though that can be very expensive. The issue of drainage is very important as well constructed facilities may become "useless" many hours after rainfall if drainage is inadequate.

(c) **TRAFFIC FLOW:** To think safety, traffic flow around activity areas can not be ignored. During sports programme of activities there should be no interference by the traffic of automobiles or pedestrians. Driveways should have direct access to parking areas without bisecting play areas. In many of the universities play areas are crisscrossed with footpaths by students who want short routes to their destinations. Solid fencing should be installed in activity areas for safety, security, isolation, enclosure, screening traffic control and for the protection of participants, spectators, property, facilities, equipment and supplies.

(d) **SITTING ARRANGEMENT:** The level of sports spectatorship is on the increase. It is important, suitable and convenient that sitting arrangements be provided if spectators' interest is to be sustained. The seats may be fixed or bleachers may be used. In these days of rising sports hooliganism, it is necessary to fence spectators' stands from the playing area.

(e) **UTILITIES:** There are two utilities indispensable in sports facilities - water and electricity. There has to be good source of drinking water and water for shower, toilet and laundry. Water also needs to be used to sprinkle lawns, courts and flowers.

Electricity is required to operate public address system, score boards, photo finish cameras, and other electronic gadgets. electricity is needed for field and court lighting, car parks and for general illumination, security and safety.

(f) SURFACING: The different types of surfacing materials may be grouped under; earth, turf, asphalt, synthetics, concrete masonry. etc., No one surfacing material can meet the needs of all outdoor activity areas. However, in selecting surfacing materials for outdoor sports area, managers should consider such qualities as; durability, economy and ease of maintenance, safety, multiplicity of use, resilience, year round usage and pleasing appearance.

(g) THE HANDICAPPED: Most Nigeria universities have no sports programme for the handicapped. This is a case of apartheid in the universities. It is even most unfortunate that Nigerian Universities Games Association (N.U.G.A.) 24 years after its inception (1966 - 1990) has no sports for the handicapped in its programme.

In planning university sports facilities, consideration must be given to the facility needs of the handicapped so that within the limits of their conditions they can meet their sports aspirations.

(h) HEALTH NEEDS: Any sports facility that does not meet the health needs of the participants, officials and the spectators is functionally defective. Basic to facility engineering is optimal promotion of a healthful sports environment. These include: safety, physiological needs, water supply, voice level, space, fire device security, toiletry, medical care, sanitary environment and good lighting. Nothing that can promote healthful environment should be overlooked.

THE FINAL THRUST: After a thorough conceptualization of the project, a reputable architectural firm should be consulted. In consulting the architect, the deliberations should centre on: quantity, quality, and cost. After the selection of the architect, a contractual agreement has to be completed and signed. Before the work starts a meeting of all those involved in the project should be convened to discuss the comprehensive plan, designate functions and delineate operational patterns. Drawings must be made known to all. The construction should be carried on in phases. At every phase there must be inspection and approval before the next phase begins. On completion of the project, the construction firm should be made to undertake a post construction maintenance for at least five years. This important post construction clause must be included in the contractual terms. The arrangement reduces the potential for post construction disappointments.

THE END: These are exceptional times. Never in our national history has there been equal economic, social and political challenges. The universities are affected by the changes. With moratorium on capital projects, to embark on capital sports project in these crucial times does not only require perfect accountability but far sighted and clairvoyant design options.

Facilities engineering is a reflection of the taste, ideals, personality and the concept the administrator has of University sports. Designing super quality, and flexible sports facilities in the universities will reflect wisdom for generations. Each tax

payer's naira put into it will be seen to have been wisely invested. Sports facilities engineering does not end after infrastructural construction. In fact there it begins. While the construction of modern facilities is an important administrative function, equally important is the maintenance. In Nigeria lack of maintenance culture is our undoing. Any sports facility no matter the ingenuity of the design can not last if abused through maintenance neglect. With proper maintenance, facilities will last longer, provide a healthy sports environment, be less costly and provide a more satisfying experiences for participants and spectators. Every facility user should take pride to ensure that it is maintained in perfect condition.

The time for the development of imaginative sports facilities in Nigerian universities is TODAY. It ought to have been yesterday. The universities are rather late, but getting out of the woods at any time is an important self actualization.

SUGGESTIONS: If Nigerian universities hope to meet the challenge and keep the privilege of leading the society as well as in sports they should provide the necessary answers by:

1. providing "all purpose" facilities urgently in the universities;
2. establishing an autonomous department of sports, and physical culture;
3. ensuring that every university student earns "compulsory - elective" credit in sports;
4. instituting university sports facility endowment fund.

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