

Sport-based Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development in Nigerian Universities*

O. B Dada

ABSTRACT

This paper made reflections on the purpose of modern Universities and their relationship to sustainable development through sport based entrepreneurship. It is observed that Universities adopted a position of not being business venture oriented. The purpose of modern Universities should be fostering sustainable development by making this planet or their immediate environment a better place. This could be achieved through providing opportunities for entrepreneurship through scholarship emanating from research. The relationship between sport entrepreneurship and sustainable development was determined by examining sport based entrepreneurial opportunities that Universities can undertake for developing skills and empowering their immediate environment financially and extending to the Nigerian society in general. It is concluded that Universities can generate revenue and develop skills through sports entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

Keywords: *Sport based entrepreneurship, sustainable development*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of University Education is to create opportunities for solving human problem through scholarship. Derek (1982) observes that we are in the midst of an unprecedented human caused environmental crisis. Given the present state of the world and Nigeria in particular, modern Universities should assist to make the world a better place by enabling people to live more meaningful and satisfying lives by helping to promote environmental sustainability. Gong (2006) is of the opinion that the responsibilities of Universities include knowledge innovation and distribution of talent cultivation, pace setting for economic empowerment. Onokeshoraye and Nwoye (1995) further opine that it is well known that institutions of higher

O. B. Dada is a Lecturer, Physical and Health Education Unit, Institute of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. E-mail: chukksdadbenson@yahoo.com.

**This paper first appeared in Readings in Education, Development and Globalization, 2011 edition.*

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learning have the main responsibility of equipping individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills required for positions of entrepreneurship and other professions. They noted that Universities serve as a conduit for the transfer, adaptation and dissemination of knowledge in the world to support government and business world with advice and consultancy services.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it the key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overreaching priority should be given (World Commission on Environment Development, 1987). There is Poverty in the society created by the inability of the society to gainfully employ the teeming population of youths which parade our streets even within the University campuses. Most youths cannot have access to quality University education because of the poverty imposed on them by human caused environmental crisis.

Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for the entire earth citizen without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely (WCED, 1987). As earlier observed the universities are established to manage the environment so that the quality of human lives will be improved. It is observed that even within Nigeria Universities there are students and graduates who are groaning in poverty. Some cannot even pay their schools fees while graduates are jostling for, and endlessly waiting for jobs which are not in view. The university system has the potential of creating opportunities that can palliate the current situation in our society and this requires an understanding that inaction has consequences and that we must find innovative ways to change institutional structure and influence individual behaviours.

Universities today only spend money generated from other sectors but can hardly generate enough internal funds to cater for at least fifty percent of her annual budgets. This can be cured by taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels particularly at the ivory tower of the society to which people look to for sustainable development. It is clear that there are opportunities yet untapped especially in the area of entrepreneurship for sustainable development in sport. The problem at stake however is exploiting such opportunities for entrepreneurship in sport for sustainable development in Nigerian universities.

SPORT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Both entrepreneurship and sport management have become important areas of business management. In the past decade sports has been studied from a variety of different disciplines, including economics, philosophy, marketing, psychology and sociology. However not much is known about sport from entrepreneurship perspective (Ratten, 2010). Entrepreneurship is important to the sport sector as constant innovation by business is required to meet changing consumer demands especially in our Universities (Ball, 2005). Entrepreneurship in sport can help to develop organizations and to increase the number of new products and services being invented (Herdy, 1996). In entrepreneurship theory, it is generally assured that ventures are created by an entrepreneur acting individually or as a member of a team.

A new venture is networked temporary coalition of individuals and organizations with a local economy (Taylor, 1999). There are several departments and other organizations within the university vicinity that can be networked to enhance the economy of the universities. The mainstream entrepreneurship is the primacy of economic goals and new venture creation. The universities in Nigeria have the potentials of innovations by creating new ventures to enhance the socio economic life of students and their immediate surroundings. Sport is entrepreneurship process as innovation and change are key elements of sport. Entrepreneurship is a venture that is open to all institutions and individuals for personal and institutional sustainable development. An entrepreneur is someone who runs a business at his own financial risk. It means someone or group of individuals that see an opportunity puts together a team and builds a business and profits from the opportunity (Ajagu, 2005).

Entrepreneurship is all about opening up and exploiting opportunities to enhance personal and or institutional financial standing which promotes sustainable development. Entrepreneurship is important as it encourages innovative activities that facilitate socio economic change (Ratten, 2010). The importance of entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized in national development, poverty eradication, and employment generation. But sadly enough, Nigerian universities do not place much premium on entrepreneurship. It is traditionally believed that universities have nothing to do with entrepreneurship but mainly concerned with academics and

scholarships. Falase (2001) supporting this view opines that the university is not a business venture therefore cannot be run with an entrepreneurship mentality. Falase believes that apart from skeletal consultancy services, if universities engage in other business ventures, scholarship and teaching will suffer. In modern times Universities have begun to open up opportunities for revenue generating ventures. It is more appropriate to view Universities as businesses that have interest other than merely educating their students. Universities can make a business out of their academics by not only engaging in research but going into gray areas that research can generate funds. Most Universities have only exploited the area of creating more academic departments with the intention of attracting more fees and other service charges. The University is made up of youngsters within the ages of 17-30years who can be engaged in sport enterprise for revenue generation but this area is not effectively exploited for sustainable development of our youths and the Universities. Colleges and Universities in developed countries around the world are making profit from sports enterprise and Nigerian Universities can venture into sport enterprise for sustainable development.

Entrepreneurship in Sport for Sustainable Development

Sport entrepreneurship often occurs as a result of people having the willingness to expend their organizational efforts in the field of sport (Terjesen, 2008). Sports development is all about providing and improving opportunities for people to participate in sports at any level. Whether you are an elite performer, an absolute beginner, a coach, an enthusiast or just looking for a fun activity, there are plenty of opportunities to participate; the wider the range of opportunities, the greater the opportunity for entrepreneurship. Sport exercise and health are dedicated to improving the access to and provision of sport for all, aiming at improving sport participation by students, staff and the wider community. A range of programmes can be organized by the universities to provide support for those wishing to coach or officiate as well as providing an enabling environment for running students' sport clubs. There can be a Nigerian Joint University initiative in coaching education to provide opportunities to train and certain sports can benefit through the universities coaching development programme. Corporate industries and other stakeholders such as banks, oil exploration companies

can be attracted to sponsor students. Sports clubs and their members and supported to develop coaching officiating and other activities. Opportunities for beginners can be improved by creating training programmes that attract fees in a variety of sports. Such opportunities are offered in conjunction with athletic clubs or sports departments. There are also a range of recreational and social sporting activities that can be initiated by universities to divert idle minds from engaging in evil social vices. Students are given opportunities to participate in intramural leagues and competitions, either University sport event or represent the University through the sports council which can be sources of financial empowerment.

Apart from high level teaching and research in sport and exercise science, the Universities should focus on development of sporting excellence and sport participation. Sport is an inviting area for youths, it can provide outstanding opportunities for students and staff to develop their academic interests and abilities, to involve themselves in sport at whatever level they choose and generally to get the most out of a higher education environment. To complement the academic departments involved in teaching and research, a sport development centre should be established to facilitate all other sport operations in which the university is involved.

Other opportunities for entrepreneurship in University sport include: sports can attract sponsorship and scholarship for University athletes and staff. Students that participate in revenue generating sports such as soccer, and basketball can earn huge sums of money for their institutions that engage their sport skills. Several colleges and Universities in developed countries like United States of America operate athletic teams comprised of student athletes, coupled with the lucrative contracts. In some cases contracts are arranged with corporate entities that pay large amounts for advertising within the sporting arena on college campuses. Coaches of athletic teams in addition sign personal contracts in conjunction with Universities and companies in exchange for promising outfit for their players in the shoes and sportswear manufactured by these companies. The financial benefits accruing there from are supplemented with regular and post season ticket sales, concession sales, local television and radio contract and increased endowments hence colleges and Universities profit handsomely from their participation in sports entrepreneurship (Christopher, 2008). A University community sports volunteer scheme should be established. Such schemes allow students and

staff to achieve nationally recognized qualification and gain experience in volunteering within community organization offering sporting opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our Universities are a depot of experts and professionals who engage in research and learning for national development. Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all people and increasing the use of natural resources. The Universities are enterprises, oriented towards the process of developing entrepreneurial skills and should be centers for entrepreneurship practice. Sport is entrepreneurship process as innovations and change are key elements of sports, therefore, the Universities should create a network of sporting activities that generate revenue for its sustainability and for the benefits of those who depend on it for personal development.

The universities have not sufficiently utilized enough available opportunities at its disposal for sustainable development. It is further observed that narrowing the role of universities to scholarship and research without creating ample opportunity to practice entrepreneurial skills generally and in sport has shortcomings. Furthermore, most universities rely on their sponsors to provide almost their entire annual budgets for growth which negates the concept of sustainable development. The resultant effect of the above observation is that universities produce individuals who lack the entrepreneurial skill to make a living but falls back on the same government to which the universities depend on for survival. Based on these observations the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Universities should establish sport development centers.
- (2) University sport should be positioned for entrepreneurship in sports.
- (3) Nigerian universities should organize sport league in some major sports to enable talented athletes express and perfect their skills.
- (4) University sports should be positioned to enable athletes pursue their athletic careers alongside with their academics.
- (5) Opportunity for the acquisition of sport skills should be provided in Nigeria universitism.

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