

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND SPORTS ADMINISTRATION PRACTICE IN NIGERIA, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES -- Ananomo Leonard E

Professional ethics and sports administration practice in Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of professional ethics in sports administration practice is to establish behavioral standards that will serve as guide to practicing physical educators in their dealing with students and to create a positive image to the government and members of the public. Therefore, this paper discusses professional ethics and physical education practice in Nigeria focusing on the challenges and strategies. The paper describes professional ethics, physical education practice in Nigeria and strategies to entrench acceptable standards in practice of physical education in Nigeria. It concludes that professional ethics should be integrated into the operations of practicing physical education. It recommends, among others, that physical educators should always keep to their prescribed code of conduct in the training profession. The paper also recommends that defaulters who are guilty of professional misconduct be sanctioned appropriately.

Introduction

It is expected that every profession has its own code of conduct or behavioral expectations. For example, Judges are expected to deliver judgment without fear or favor. The accounting profession requires its members to exercise sensitive professional and moral judgment in all their actions while the medical profession demands that its practitioners exercise due diligence in the discharge of their duties to save lives. Similarly, the professional physical educators should exhibit some measures of acceptable moral standards in the discharge of his/her duties to his/her students. However, the level of ethical conduct in Nigeria is unacceptably low given the non-calling attitude, divided loyalty and lack of due diligence that characterize physical education profession in Nigeria.

It is very obvious that nowadays, individuals are experiencing multi-dimensional crisis that bother on every facet of human life and therefore, there is a growing need for the services of professional physical educator and exercise physiologist to individuals or group of individuals as the case may be. In addition, institutions mounting physical education courses are springing up more rapidly. The increasing need for sports psychology service in the society has led to a situation in which people who have no formal training in physical education playing the role of exercise psychology while the growing number of physical education graduates churned out by

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educational institutions has led to a somewhat large army of physical educators with paper qualifications but, without the requisite professional acumen.

It is also instructive to note that many people are involved in physical activities at one level or the other but, not all of them can be professional. It therefore becomes imperative that physical educators must follow strictly their ethical principles that shape this mode of behavior. Onajite (2015) observes that the moral fabric of the Nigerian society has become increasingly weakened over the years such that dishonesty and moral decadence are the order of the day. In the school system the scourge of social evil is epitomized in examination malpractice, embezzlement of institutional funds and similar corrupt practices within the system, dishonesty, lack of dedication to duty and so on. In such a scenario, the image of the school system and by extension, the physical education profession is seriously tarnished. Thus, it becomes difficult to achieve the national goals and objectives of education. This necessitates strict adherence to professional ethics which will go a long way in shaping and molding the behavior of professional physical education.

What is a Profession?

A profession is an occupation for which one has received specialized training and skills and to follow as a career (Odumosu, 1999). Examples includes: medicine, teaching, law, engineering, sports administrators etc. it also refers to a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification. In order words, a profession is an occupation, practice, or vocation requiring mastery of a complex set of knowledge and skills (www.businessdictionary.com.2017).

Who is a Professional?

A professional is someone who is teamed or skilled in a particular job or occupation in which he/she has specialized and which he/she intends to practice throughout his/her working career (Odumosu, 1999). A professional can thus be described as an individual engaged in a specific activity as his/her main paid occupation rather than as a pastime. In addition, a professional can described as a person formally certified by a professional *body of* belonging to specific profession by virtue of having completed a required course of studies and practice. It is noteworthy that the competence of professional can usually be measured against an establish set of standards.

Concept of Professional Ethics

The word ethics is derived from the Greek “ethos” which means customary behavior, character and morals. It is also from a word “ethicus” (Onajite. 2015). Kolo (2014) referred to ethics as accepted principles of right or wrong that govern the conduct of a person, the members of a profession or the actions of an organization. However, Hornby (2005) defined ethics as the study of how our decisions affect other people. Ethics are principles or beliefs about what is right or wrong. Therefore, it can be concluded that ethics refers to our idea of what is right or wrong and what behavior is good or bad.

The ethics of a given profession relate to the moral rules and principles of behavior for deciding what is right or wrong. According to Aluko (2009), ethics are concerned with contemporary norms or standards of conduct that governs the relationship among human beings and their institutions. Hornby (2016) opined that the term “ethics” is concerned with principles

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of right or wrong, the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, the study of right and wrong is human behavior or the ability to understand the differences between right and wrong.

According to Author (2003), professional ethics are well founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of right delegations, benefits to society, fairness or specific values. Ethics are the values and principles directing right and wrong behavior of an individual or a group (Hornby 2016). People who have a strong sense of vision and ethical values have the courage and stand up and make the right choice. Therefore, professional ethics encompass the personal and corporate standards of behavior expected of professionals. Professional people and those working in acknowledge professions exercise specialized knowledge and skills. The way the use of this knowledge is governed when providing service to the public can be considered a moral issue that is termed professional ethics (Wikipedia, 2011).

Furthermore, Davidson and Rock (2014) observed that professional ethics cover one's conduct or behavior and practice when carrying out professional works. Such works may include consulting, researching, leaching and learning. Every profession has its code of ethics except it is not yet an organized profession. If every person decides to keep the ethics of wherever he/she works, then professional ethics are being observed. By establishing code of ethics people imbibe the culture of doing the things to prevent exploitation of the client and thus preserve the integrity of the profession. Buttressing the assertion above, Aluko (2009), outline the following five reasons why members of a profession follow ethical norms as they perform their duties.

- i. Personal value system
- ii. Religious beliefs
- iii. The law
- iv. Public opinion
- v. Fear of punishment

Hence, the essence of exhibiting professional conduct is to uphold a good reputation for the profession concerned. In addition to the above, a professional is required to have ethic major attributes as follows:

- ❖ **Competence:** This will make the public have confidence in his/her operation as a professional.
- ❖ **Discipline:** The professional should be a man of discipline who also exhibits honesty, hard work, goodtime management and sense of responsibility.
- ❖ **Integrity:** the professional should command a high level of integrity as rooted in his conviction which serves to detect him or her from taking advantage or his or her organization, the customer, client or subordinate.

It is no gainsaying that professionals who possess those noble attributes are usually reputable professionals. According to Abdulkadir (2005) the major principle of professional conduct holds that: “members should exercise sensitive professional and moral judgments in all their activities while carrying out their responsibilities as professionals”.

Concept of Sport Administrator

Administrators have been described variously by various experts, Salawu and Abdulkadir (2015), described sports administrator as a process by means of which the helper express care and concern towards the person with a problem and facilitates that person's personal growth and being changed through self-knowledge, Abdulkadir (2005), described physical education as a professional help that is given to an individual who is in a temporary state of indecision,

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confusion, disorder, distress, maladjustment for proper adjustment and understanding of himself and the world around him.

To achieve these goals, the relationship should be person to person, although sometimes, it may involve more than two people. It is thus designed to help people understand and clarify their views and learn how to reach their self determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choice and the resolution of emotional or interpersonal problem. (Rasaq, Abdullahi & Gafar (2015). Furthermore, Abdulkadir (2005), viewed sports as a learning process in which the administrators help the athlete to work out his problem or concerns. The goal is to help the athlete arrive at solutions, answers, plans, decisions which are satisfactory and rewarding to the present and future.

Who is a professional sports Administration?

There is much more to being a professional sports administrator other than the training and looking the part. A professional administrator is a highly trained individual who is able to use a different range of administrative approaches with his/her athletes (skillsyouneed.com 2017). According to Wikipedia (2011) a sports administrator is a professionally qualified person who provides useful services to athletes based on their needs, the understanding of their immediate environment and its influences. In the words of Abdulkadir (2005), professional administrators are personnel who are capable of being regarded as a special kind of trainer whose major role is to assist individuals through interpersonal relationship. Professional administrators perform tasks that are more than ordinary, requiring a long period of preparation and education. Therefore, they are expected to acquire a second degree certificate in organization and administration of sports.

Characteristics of a Professional Sports Administrator

A professional administrator is expected to possess some vital characteristics that is why Hornby (2016), outlined seven characteristics of an effective administrator as follows:

- i.** Proper organization of paperwork, scheduling and personal details
- ii.** Ethical and professional practice
- iii.** Self-education
- iv.** Confidence in personnel position and responsibility
- v.** Respect for clients' beliefs and struggles
- vi.** Ability to communicate effectively
- vii.** Flexible attitude

Furthermore, earegnitenan.com explained that an effective sports administrator must:

- i. Be patient with the clients
- ii. Be a good listener
- iii. Be compassionate
- iv. Be non-judgmental
- v. Be research-oriented
- vi. Be empathetic
- vii. Be discrete
- viii. Be encouraging
- ix. Possess self-awareness
- x. Maintain his real personality when working with athletes.

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In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, Quizletinc. (2017), argues that professional sports administrator must:

- i. Be artistic
- ii. Be emotionally stable
- iii. Be comfortable with themselves i.e, self-acceptance
- iv. Possess positive self-esteem
- v. Possess self-realization
- vi. Be constructively open with their thoughts and feelings.
- vii. Be courageous
- viii. Possess tolerance for ambiguity
- ix. Recognize the value of addressing the spiritual-dimension in the helping process.

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that the professional sports administrator must possess some essential characteristics in order to function effectively.

Professional Principles or Ethics in Sports Administration

According to Wikipedia (2011) every standard profession has some basic principles which guide its operation. These principles are referred to as ethics and they guide the activities of the professionals. That is why Garrison and Noreen (2003) outlined four broad areas of ethical responsibilities of professionals to include:

- 1. Professional Competence:** Professionals have a responsibility to-
 - a. Maintain an appropriate level of professional competence by constantly upgrading their knowledge and skills.
 - b. Perform their professional duties in accordance with relevant laws, regulations and technical standards.
 - c. Prepare complete and clear reports and recommendations after appropriate analysis of relevant and reliable information.
- 2. Treating sensitive matters with confidentiality:** Professional have a responsibility to:
 - a. Refrain from disclosing confidential information acquired in the course of interactions with athletes.
 - b. Inform and assure athletes appropriately about the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of interaction.
 - c. Refrain from using or appearing to use confidentially information acquired through their work for their advantage, either personally or through third parties.
- 3. Personal Integrity:** Professionals have a responsibility to:
 - a. Avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interests and advise all appropriate parties of any potential conflict.
 - b. Refrain from engaging in any activity that would prejudice their ability to carry out their duties ethically.
 - c. Refuse any gift, favour, or hospitality that would influence or appears to influence their activities.
 - d. Refrain from either actively or passively subverting the achievements of the organization where they work.

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- e. Recognize and communicate professional limitations or other constraints that would preclude responsible judgment or successful performance of an activity to client.
 - f. Communicate favourable as well as unfavourable information and professional judgments or opinions.
 - g. Refrain from engaging in or supporting any activity that would discredit the profession.
- 4. Objectivity:** Professionals have a responsibility to:
- a. Communicate information fairly and
 - b. Disclose fully all relevant information that could reasonably be expected to influence an athlete's understanding of reports, comments and recommendations.

Classification of Professional Ethics for Sports Administrator

Professional ethics for sports administrator can be categorized into two broad groups namely: general ethics and work ethics.

(a) General Ethics: These include the personal qualities that sports administrator should imbibe when relating with other colleagues and

- (1) Respect
- (2) Loyalty
- (3) Patience
- (4) Orderliness
- (5) Punctuality
- (6) Kindness
- (7) Cooperation
- (8) Courtesy
- (9) Honesty
- (10) Discipline
- (11) Integrity
- (12) Self-control
- (13) Dedication
- (14) Observation
- (15) Commitment
- (16) Humility
- (17) Sensitivity
- (18) Tolerance
- (19) Truthfulness
- (20) Obedience

(b) Work Ethics: These are ethics that guide a sports administrator on what is expected or him/her in the profession. These responsibilities imply that sports administrator should:

1. Be dedicated to their profession
2. Keep the rules and regulations guiding their institutions or establishment
3. Be tidy (both in person and work)
4. Be versatile and proficient in their fields
5. Act as role models to athletes and subordinates
6. Be helpful to both staff and athletes when necessary
7. Be punctual to work and appointments

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8. Be firm in decision making
9. Have the interest of the athletes and the profession
10. Be good judges when evaluating athletes
11. Be democratic leaders
12. Have a good grasp of the subject-matter being handled
13. Have a good communication skill
14. Be industrious and have initiative
15. Be sincere
16. Be ready to improvise materials that are not readily available
17. Be approachable
18. Exercise self-control at all times especially in the face of provocation and temptations.
19. Upgrade their skills through attendance at seminars, conferences, workshops.

Challenges of Sports Administrators Practice in Nigeria

Wikipedia (2011) highlights the following as impediments to the growth of the sports administration profession in Nigeria:

- a. **Inconsistent Government Policy:** The federal government in Nigeria seems to recognize the importance of sports administrator but not much has been done to uplift standard of the profession for instance many schools in Nigeria have not sporting facilities.
- b. **Inadequate Funding:** like most educational venture in Nigeria, sports programmes are grossly underfunded at all levels of the education system.
- c. **Inadequate Facilities:** many schools do not have adequate facilities to mourn effectiveness coaching programmes. Such facilities like office accommodation, file cabinets, computer units, shelves, psychological tests and non-testy device, communication gadgets and transport facilities are lacking in most educational institutions.
- d. **Cultural Barriers:** cultural barriers take the form of beliefs system, difference in languages, religion and cultural background. For instance, some students find it difficult to discuss their concerns with their school coaches whom they regard as “strangers” from different religious or cultural backgrounds. Wikipedia (2011) observed that some see sports administrator as an invasion of individual’s privacy. Consequently, this group of people always attempt to frustrate rather than support athlete programmes in schools. Similarly, Wikipedia (2011) opined that in the African society, authority is patrilineal and thus every family member is expected to take directive from and respect the authority of tire father not to participate in sporting activities.

Conclusion

Professional ethics if strictly adhered to by sports administrators will go a long way in creating effective and efficient system that will ultimately bring about the desired change in the moral standards of the Nigerian society. Considering the fact that contemporary sports administrator faces many challenges in upholding ethical practices, practitioners are expected to embrace option such as decency and responsibility revitalizing the culture of excellence, encouraging the establishment of ethical organization, orientation and a host of others as good measures to boost standard professional practices in sports administration. These measures will

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not only make contemporary administrator to be socially responsible but equally assist to engage in ethical behavior and practices obey existing laws as well as identify and practice what is morally right.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion of this paper the following recommendations are suggested:

- The government should provide enabling environment for the sports administration to thrive in Nigeria.
- Lecturers of sports administration courses should make use of modern methods of teaching and learning that are based on inquiry and problem-solving.
- Physical education should be made relevant to the needs and aspiration of the society.
- The curriculum for physical education should be reviewed to include theory and practice of its ethics.
- There should be collaboration and linkages with professional sports associations in advanced countries.
- Government should enact vibrant laws that will restrict quacks from joining the sports administrator profession.

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