Knowledge of Psychological Principles: An antecedent for Effective And Result Oriented Sports Management
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Introduction

Managing any activity that involves the input of human beings requires proper harmonization of all variables in order to achieve the set objectives and goals of such endeavour in which Sport management, is no exception.

Management has been described as the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the use of an organization resources to effectively and economically attain its objective. Bittel et al (1984).

A sport organization can be likened to a system; that is a group of related parts organised to work together for some purpose. Sport management is therefore the function that integrates the parts of this system and makes sure that they work together toward a desired purpose.

The goal of management is to integrate the diverse elements of business - people, machinery, money, building and raw-materials and direct them toward a common purpose.

To do this well, a sport manager must combine the intuitive abilities of art with the rational methods of science.

At this juncture, it should be fundamentally understood that the application of psychological principles, rational and quantitative approaches are the required antecedents expected of a sport manager to achieve the desired goal and success.

However, before a detailed analysis of the psychological variables required in the successful management of sport is embarked upon, an understanding of the various management approaches is required. These management approaches clearly
show that for a sport manager to succeed, he requires the knowledge and application of psychological principles in the day-to-day performance of his job.

Sport managers have always adopted either the classical approach which emphasizes rational analysis to the production and management functions of business, workers and equipment productivity can be increased resulting in higher profits; An approach that was made popular by Fredrick W. Taylor in the United States and Henri Fayol in France.

Another one hither-to adopted by managers is the behavioural approach which emphasizes the human factors in the business of an organization; Its adherents believed that an organization’s goals could be met only by first understanding and then consciously dealing with human needs and interactions.

This approach places great emphasis on human motivation and on group dynamics.

The third approach is the quantitative approach which stresses the use of numbers and derived largely from system theory. It is a group of verbal and mathematical principles that describes how the related parts of a system may be organized. Such arrangement permits management to predict how changes in one part will affect the other parts.

However, the modern managers are now adopting what is described as situational approach or contingency. This approach enables the manager to adopt the appropriate and relevant aspects of the earlier three approaches to the immediate need of his organization for result oriented efforts.

In achieving the set goals of his organization, the sport manager typically performs four key functions:

a) Planning
b) Organizing and staffing
c) Directing and coordinating and
d) Evaluating and controlling.

Each of these functions is continuous and are interrelated.

The Place of Psychological Principles in Sports Management

Sporting activities like other human activities require certain variables to synchronise positively towards the realization of the goal of an athlete and the
manager alike; in other words success in sports performance depends on certain psychological constructs among which if one or more is (are) missing or not properly managed by the sport manager and the athlete him/herself, there are chances that such desired or anticipated success will become elusive.

It has been observed that no two individuals are the same, hence individual differences play a prominent role when the various psychological considerations are being observed for the purpose of success in sport performance and management.

In this paper, attempt will be made to look at the relevance and importance of such psychological factors in achieving success in sport: Among these are Leadership, Personality, Motivation, Emotion and Aggression, Communication, Level of Skill, Aspiration, Positive mental attitude, Determination, and Maturation.

Leadership

Leadership has been generally conceived as the behavioural process of influencing individuals or groups toward set goals (Barrow, 1977). It is a broad definition that encompasses many dimensions of coaches’ leadership behaviour, including the processes they use to make decisions, the type and frequency of feedback they give in respect to athletes’ performance, the techniques they use to motivate individual athlete and the type of relationship they establish with athletes.

For a leader to be effective in sport domain, four components must be considered:

1. Qualities of the leader
2. Leadership styles
3. Situational factors
4. Followers factors.

1. **Qualities of an Effective Sport Manager**

Very High intelligence, assertive, ability to empathize, he must be intrinsically motivated, should be flexible, ambitious, self-confident, optimistic; innovative, good communication process, and ability to make decision.

2. **Leadership Styles**

The leadership style adopted which may be autocratic, democratic or leizzer-fair will determine his effectiveness. Though the situational leadership style is recommended for effective leadership.
3. **Situational Factors**

A leader should be sensitive to the specific situation and environment; some of the situational factors come into play when planning for effective leadership in sport (Martens 1987) include team versus individual sports, size of the team, time available, number of assistances and tradition.

4. **Followers Characteristics**

The characteristics of the followers are also important in determining how effective leadership is. The leader must consider gender, ability level, personality, age and experience and type of sport.

**Personality**

Understanding personality is as important to coaches and sports managers as other variables, because an athlete’s behaviour which is unique is very much interrelated with movement activities: (Singer, 1976).

Since personality involves the totality of an individual i.e. his interest, physique, goals etc; hence the choice of sport depends on individuals personality trait.

A tall man would naturally pick or choose the game of basketball, whereas a short athlete with lower extremity would be a good gymnast.

**Motivation**

Motivation has generally been considered as one of the most important consideration in motor performance and skill acquisition in sporting activity.

Conceptually, motivation has been described as an urge, arousal, drive, energiser or motive which spur a person to action. Motivation is seen as a powerful activator, without which little or no learning can take place.

Theoretically, motivation is said to be either intrinsic or extrinsic. An intrinsically motivated individual is said to take part in any activity for the love and joy he derives from it and not because of material gain, whereas an extrinsically motivated individual chooses an activity because of material reward derived from such activity.

For an athlete to perform creditably well and to succeed in his chosen sport, he must be motivated optimally and appropriately.

Though, many theorists have advocated that athletes should be motivated intrinsically to be able to perform well; however, the present economic situation of the world where individual strives for economic survival tends to shift support from
intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation.

This assertion could be supported by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he postulated that man's needs are arranged in hierarchical order and that interest shifts from one stage of need to the other when such need might have been achieved.

Little wonder that elite athletes always look for greener pastures having achieved certain level of prominence in their community before they get to their peak.

It is therefore important for the sport manager to know that individuals have many different goals in being involved in sporting activity. Such managers should find out through the sport psychologist the motivational needs of the athletes before they could be motivated.

**Emotion**

The sport manager should also know that the ability of any athlete to maintain a relative stable emotional outlook and composure play a major role in determining his success in sport.

Psychologically, the stress level, anxiety level and other emotional variables are some of the major determinants of success in sport.

Certain sports, though require high level of aggression whereas others may not require high arousal level before the desired success in sport could be attained and achieved. However, for the purpose of this paper, six types of aggression have been identified, these include trait aggression, socialize aggression, game aggression, strategic aggression, situational aggression and post-game aggression.

It is part of the sport psychologist's training to determine the type of aggression among the athlete.

**Maturation**

One important psychological construct that have often than not been neglected in dealing with the psychological make-up of an athlete is maturation.

Singer (1976) described maturation as the development of inherent genetic characteristics through an ongoing process of physiological and anatomical change attributable to the passage of time rather than to practice or learning. Maturation makes a great deal of difference in the learning and performance of an athlete. In achieving success in sport, the maturational level of the athlete should be considered.
Level of Skill

This is another psychological component of sport performance of individual athlete. A deficient athlete may find it difficult to summon courage to face the challenges of a competition even when his opponent lack some psychological tonic to defeat him.

Social Factors as determinant of Success in Sport

The sport manager must understand that certain social factors are equally important and determine success in sport performance.

The social factor that determine performance include facilities, equipment, the calibre of coaches and fund.

Good facilities and equipment enhance individuals performance and it has psychological effect on the general performance of the athlete.

The audience which could be ‘seen’ (crowd) or ‘unseen’ have tremendous impact on the general performance of athletes.

Other major factors include the level of aspiration of the athlete which will determine how far he will go in his chosen sport.

Managers should also know that positive mental attitude and determination are part of the psychological factors that will ensure success in sports performance and management.

Having identified the relevance of psychological principles int he effective management of sports, there is a need for the sport managers to understand some of the specific functions of the sport psychologist.

Nideffer, Du Frense, Nesvig' and Selder (1980) identified the following as those functions in which sport psychology practitioners are involved, these include:

- developing performance improvement programme
- using psychological assessment techniques
- providing consultative and programme development service for coaches, trainers, managers and others who work directly with athletes.

Clayne, Jensen and Fisher (1979) while making a submission on the need for sport psychologist in the training of an outstanding athlete wrote that the maximal ability of a person to perform in an athletic event is obviously limited by his physical characteristics, but beyond these broad restrictions psychological factors often play
The authors submitted that efforts will be greatly enhanced by giving more attention to the psychological aspects of the athletes, and the psychological interactions between the coach and athlete.

Sohi and Omotayo (1993) noted that the application of psychology in Sport management is desirable because a distortion in the emotional equilibrium of the athlete may have serious, negative consequence on performance.

Singer (1975) among other things listed six benefits or roles of sport psychology which the manager must acknowledge in order to achieve success, these include:

1. **Social Aspect**
   - Nature of competition and cooperation
   - Group dynamics - leadership and cohesion, inter-personal relationship
   - Social facilitation
   - Social-cultural factors influencing performance.

2. **Development Aspect**
   - Growth and development of motor activities by age and sex
   - Genetic and environmental factors

3. **Psychiatrical Aspect:** It is not uncommon to observe the manifestation of psychopathological problems among athletes, such problems can be
   - Behavioural and adjustment problems
   - Injury proneness
   - Exercises
   - Avoidance of stressful situation during training and competition

4. **Personality Aspect** which deals with
   - Desires
   - Personality traits and temperament
   - Effects of personality on performance and vice-versa

5. **Psychometric Aspect:** It includes experimental and descriptive understanding of the behaviour.

6. **Environmental Aspect:** This aspect is to be understood with reference to pedagogical principles, it includes:
- Use of teaching method
- Scheduling of practice
- Evaluation methods in learning
- Skill learning and maturity
- Use of teaching and psychological aids

Writing further on the role of Sport Psychologist, Nideffer, (1981) wrote that sport psychologist can make use of psychological techniques such as biofeedback, meditation, hypnosis and autogenic training to improve the consistency of an athlete's performance; while Singer (1984) pointed out the potential and real roles and functions of sport psychologists which he described as varied and exciting.

The author listed the roles and function with implications for athletes and sport manager which include:

1) Scientist - contributing to a body to knowledge
2) Scholar - developing/transmitting the body of knowledge
3) Intermediary - between coach and athletes
4) Psychodiagnostician - of athletic potential
5) Analyst - of practice/training condition
6) Optimizer - of performance potential
7) Counsel - for conflict management
8) Consultant - for the conduct of performance and
9) Spokes person for morality in sport and the welfare of athletes.

Adeyeye (1996) had suggested that Sport Psychologist should be engaged by all football teams to help them manage their psychological problems, he also suggested that technical officials should take part in workshops on stress which often lead to aggression and violence to ensure they understand the effect that stress has, not only on the players involved, but the public.

Conclusion

In this paper attempts had been made to identify the need for sport-managers to understand some basic psychological principles involved in the management of athletes for optimal performance.

Various psychological factors that determine the success of sportmen and women were also highlighted in the paper.
It is hoped that if these factors and principles are properly harnessed and harmonized will make the job of a sport manager easier.

Ikulayo (1996) had noted that "It is now left with sport personnel at top level who are also aware of the relevance of sport psychology to excellent performance to deliberately seek for psychological services for athletes in terms of counselling, guidance, psychological tuning/therapy, motivational devices, mental skill training." e.t.c. She believed that these services can be best provided by experts who are trained in the field and have had sufficient educational background to deal with athletes with maturity and understanding.

It should also be an eye opener that the relevance of sport psychologists in the preparation and management team of our sport men and women should be of paramount importance because specific psychological skills that will make these athletes excel could only be taught by the sport psychologist.

Ikulayo (1996) identified the following as typical problems associated with athlete

- Coping with anxiety
- Coping with training schedules and loaded practices
- Coping with harsh weather condition and various environmental fluctuations
- Coping with fatigue and
- Coping with competitive stress among other things, she posited that the acquisition and perfection of psychological skills will help the athletes (and managers alike) to reach their potential and maximise their abilities.

This follows the fact that the athletes need to be groomed in order to face the challenges of life and sport.

Basically, a sport manager should be aware, apart from the earlier stated principles that for athlete to succeed, he/she (athlete) must possess good communication skill, self-confidence, set appropriate and achievable goals, must maintain maximal concentration level, possess self-awareness of anxiety and anxiety reduction techniques.

All these can not be achieved if a sport psychologist has not worked with the athletes to teach them the appropriate coping strategies.
Other areas that require the cooperation of the sport psychologist in the management of success oriented sport include:

- Group cohesion
- Leadership and sport performance
- Choosing a leader among the athletes
- Arousal regulation
- Sport and exercise adherence
- Burn-out and overtraining
- Aggression in sport
- Athletic injuries and injury rehabilitation.

References


