

Human Resource Management Challenges in Professional Football League Clubs in Nigeria

Erhuvwu Daniel Obukadeta¹, Ochukeme Daniel Nikoro², Ochuko Ushurhe³

¹Department of Human Kinetics, Delta State University in Affiliation with College of Education, Warri

²Department of Human Kinetics, College of Education, Mosogar, Delta State

³Department of Health Education, College of Health and Technology Ofuoma, Delta State

Abstract

The paper addresses and x-rayed the likely human resource management challenges of Nigeria Professional League Clubs as perceived practices programmes or activities which include training and development, compensation and benefits, career advancement, performance appraisal, competency management, recruitment and selection, leadership and development and talent management. Literatures have revealed the inherent problems in Nigerian Professional football Leagues (NPFL) that have made our football leagues unattractive, making Nigerian football fans more committed to European leagues. Nigeria professional football league is a corporation in which football clubs act as shareholders. We need football managers and management that have values for the game. To achieve levels of excellence as in other developed professional football leagues of the world, the NPFL clubs have some challenges which the paper have reviewed under the following subheading: Indiscipline, misplace value of system, Poor remuneration, sign on fees, match bonus, medical, inadequate welfare service in terms of salary/wages, poor quality officiating, disloyalty, Lack of infrastructure, insufficient and poor quality equipment and facilities, funding, tardiness, absenteeism. The paper recommended that the sport owners should put in the appropriate facility and equipment to enable the success of the human resource management challenges in the professional football league club, with this, the improvement of some of the challenges will handle to suit the rules and regulation of sporting activities. In a nutshell, the government should enforce the discipline of professional football league e.g. by putting in place of poor low morale, disloyalty, poor finance/funding, absenteeism and obsolete management skills on Nigerian football league performance.

Keywords: human, resources, management, challenges, professional, league.

Introduction

Football, as a competitive sport started in Nigeria in the early part of the 20th century, its emergence is traced to the Britain's who organized weekly matches between European and Nigerian Youths in Lagos. Today, we have football league that focuses on football performance efficiency and effectiveness. The football league system is contested by several clubs, while operate on a system of promotion and relegation of football clubs. All the clubs

that compete in a football league system can qualify to play. In Nigeria, there are two main leagues, the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) and the Nigeria National league (NNL). Football is probably the single most influential means of communications in the world today. It is a strong instrument of national integration. In recent times, it has undergone a radical change and has become a big industry globally. It is no longer a game for mere entertainment of the public but has become

a lucrative commercialized business that creates job opportunities.

Nigerian Professional Football League is a corporation in which clubs act as shareholders (Complete Sports, 2018). The winner of the Nigerian Professional Football League is expected to represent the country at the continental league football competition. This is an indicator that the clubs could be facing some related human resource management challenges (Adesina, 2017). League football clubs in Nigeria must respond to the globalization of football effectiveness and efficiency in performance as it is the use in advanced nations of the world, where technological innovation, administrative and managerial skills have witnessed over weighted influences on management challenges. One of the most important human activities in any organization such as football league club, is effective management that come on with challenges. For any football league based clubs to survive in a global socioeconomic sporting activity, they need to exploit all the available human and material resources as a means of achieving competitive advantage. In the words of Orunaloka (2016), one resource in soccer, recently recognized as providing a source of competitive advantage, is the human resource of the football clubs, and it is widely accepted that stakeholders in football clubs are important source of competitive advantage for their clubs (Iwuala, 2016).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a function in organisations designed to maximize employee performance of an employer's strategic objectives (Johnson, 2009). In the sporting industry or sport organization, human

resource management has four essential resources which can make or mar the organization. These include human, financial, materials and physical. The human resources are so essential in that, it can manipulate and direct other resources towards achieving the football organization goal (Eboh, 2010). Fasan (2009) listed activities in human resources management of sports to include wages and salaries, training and development, career opportunities, discipline, division of roles, tasks and function loyalty, distribution of power, communication, use of technology, industrial relation and knowledge of management and so on.

People significantly according to Garba and Njidda (2009) affect the success of an organisation such as football club organization, depending on how they are chosen, required and maintain, which may bring few or many problems to covers the broad spectrum of the life of the chairmen, team managers, technical advisers, coaches, players and supporters of professional football clubs at the beginning of new season to the end of the season. Nwosu and Ugwreua (2015), observed that human resource management is concerned with the "people" dimension in management. In the words of Eboh (2010), the importance of human resource management in professional league includes competitive advantage and social responsibility towards employee literature. [Fasan, (2009); Iwuala (2016) and Erhinyodavwe (2018)], have stated that the cause of low productivity in professional football clubs sides in Nigeria include; poor management and ineffective supervision, low level of skill and negative attitude of player insufficient and poor

quality equipment and facilities and misplaced value.

Human resource is conceived with the management of people and materials while Human resource management practice, according to Johnson (2009) and Ikhioya (2001), include practice or activities such as employment, security, extensive training, office arrangement, wages differences across levels, discipline, sharing of financial status, language, sharing of performance information, exhibition of administrative skills of global best practices and so on.

Understanding the relationship between human resource management practices, programmes and their challenges, Johnson (2009) and Fasan (2001) calls for a critical examination. They identified indiscipline, poor remuneration, disloyalty, (welfare services), obsolete administrative skills absenteeism, poor quality officiating, low morale and tardiness as human resource management challenges to any organization or establishment.

The main thrust of this paper is to review some likely human resource management challenges of Nigerian Professional football league (NPFL) based clubs, with respect to how indiscipline, poor remuneration, disloyalty and others, constitute as challenges in this organization (NPFL).

Indiscipline as a Challenge To Human Resource Management Of PFL Clubs In Nigeria

Anibeze (2008) stated that the problem of footballing dishonesty, pose a substantial threat to the football integrity of Nigeria professional football league clubs. These activities of the clubs are refers to as indiscipline into human resource management of activities. Professional

football league clubs in Nigeria reveals that a number of unethical activities/practice undermine discipline. A cursory look into football management in training, and competition, between football managers and players reveal elements of indiscipline.

A successful and good football performances need training of players coaches and development of the club. According to Erhinyodavwe (2018), dexterity of human resource management practice of discipline, is an indicator to football club everywhere, including the Nigerian Professional football clubs. He noted that, indiscipline, in training and development, constitute a major challenge of human resource management of such clubs.

Where there is indiscipline, it is a challenge to talent management (Babajide, 2012). In the same breath, Omuoyine (2014) opined the need for a national dispute resolution, asserted that indiscipline has become a challenge to football career advancement. We have observed that most Nigerian players at the local stage, are unable to continue their career due to their indiscipline nature. According to Shuaibu (2019), the Deputy Governor of Edo State, there is an urgent need for Bendel Assurance FC Management to be disciplined, to go out and shop for quality serious-minded, committed and result-oriented players that can make Edo State proud again. He added that for over eleven years, Bendel Insurance Club had been in lower league. This, according to him, is not good for the state in Nigeria football sphere. One of the factors that killed or relegated this football club is an act of indiscipline.

Misplaced valued according to Garba and Njidda (2009) is a serious factor of indiscipline in our professional football league clubs. It could be said that the indiscipline to which one is acquainted very much influence him. In Nigeria, we have value system that emphasizes wealth and not achievement. This influences the coaches, players attitude to work for money. Coaches and players have become more interested in the amount they received rather than the volume and quality of their performance in the Nigeria profession football league clubs, so misplaced value constitute a challenge to human resource management of NPFL.

Poor Remuneration as a Challenge To Human Resource Management Of PFL In Nigeria

This is one of the challenges faced by the Nigerian Professional football league. According to Nwosu and Ugwuera (2015), players in the Nigerian professional football clubs are poorly remunerated and it is a very strong challenge to the management of clubs. Wages/salaries of football players are poor in Nigeria. Non-payment of football player's salary has brought NPF league clubs to disrepute (Eboh, 2015). According to Nwosu and Ugwuera (2015), players of FC Taraba United, Sharks of Port Harcourt, Dolphin of Port Harcourt, Sunshine of Akure and Enugu Rangers International were at one time or the other owed salaries. Literature have it that Dolphin of Port Harcourt took their mattresses and slept in front of the River State government house in protest for non-payment of allowance and salaries (Enenta, 2018). Also Sunshine of Akure players protested to the management in 2015 of unpaid salaries.

Sign on fees, match bonuses and medical bills and others inadequate are welfare services by which these services are inadequate as observed, they constitute challenges to professional football league clubs in Nigeria. Sign on fees are fees paid to players on signing a new contract to a new team. Enenta (2015) opined that most professional football league clubs in Nigeria, owe these signs on fees throughout the season. This is not good for our football clubs management.

Also, match bonuses are not paid to players as at when due and this depicts unprofessionalism. According to Ikhioye (2001), this factor that constitutes a major challenge to Nigerian professional football league clubs in Nigeria. Match bonuses and allowances accruable to players of a team when the team either gets an away win, away draw or a home win. This is not constant in Nigeria situation.

Medical is a major part of welfare service which a football club must render. According to Musa (2007), no club in Nigeria operates a sick bay, where specialists are employed to take care of the medical needs of the players and officials. He concluded that it is a serious factor in Nigerian Professional Football League-based Clubs. Babajide (2012) stated that most Nigerian players are regretting over playing professional football in Nigeria, as a result of injuries sustained while in active service. He further interrogated whether anyone has ever heard that a Nigerian football league player had ever been flown abroad for treatment after sustaining a serious injury. According to Johnson (2009), inadequate welfare services in terms of salary/wages, sign on fees, match bonuses and lack of medical services constitute human resource

management challenges of Nigerian Professional Football League-based clubs in Nigeria. Some of the challenges range from lack of compensation and benefits, competency management, performance appraisal, leadership development and practices to career advancement. Poor quality officiating disloyalty and management skill also constitute challenges to human Resource Management in Professional Football League.

Poor quality officiating is one of the challenges faced by the Nigerian professional league. According to Adesina (2017), officiating is always a sham in the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL). He further stated that, some stakeholders have described the shady way of officiating by some referees as a comedy show. Sometimes you see a referee telling the favoured side, mostly the home side what to do in order to be awarded a penalty or an offside goal. From Literature, Fasan (2009), Shuaibu (2019), Anibeze (2008) have it that poor quality management in terms of disloyalty, obsolete management skill are challenges to professional league in Nigeria.

Fasan (2009) asserted that disloyalty constitute a challenge to clubs in Nigeria, have no stadium of theirs. Before the commencement of the 2014 professional football league season in Nigeria, Bayelsa State paraded two football teams (Nembe City and Bayelsa United) competing for honours in the elite division. The state government could not get ready the Samson Siasia stadium on time for the resumption of hostilities. Nembe City and Bayelsa United played their home matches away from home in Omoskpu, Rivers State and Benin, Edo State, respectively. Also,

Heartland of Owerri was asked also to start their league matches at Rojeni stadium, before putting their Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri back to shape. Most pitches in Nigeria are artificial turfs. The few natural turfs among them are not maintained and are in bad shapes. Also available stadia are in bad shape and do not have training pitches, adequate facilities/digital library and no constant provision of internet network for indoor games, swimming pool etc and are not at the outskirts of the towns, that can make competency management, compensation and benefits, training and development, career advancement and talent management. Also, disloyalty to the rules and regulations of the game may lead to negativity competency management. Match officials are supposed to be honest, display current professional skills and unprofessional ethics.

Lack of Infrastructure as Challenges To Human Resource Management Of PFL In Nigeria

As a condition for the formation of a professional football club, in Nigeria, Babside (2012) noted that a football club, statutorily, should own a stadium where her matches are to be played. Some professional football clubs have no stadium of theirs. Literature Guardian New (2016) and Nwosu, (2015) have it most football for concentration.

Infrastructure is an important aspect for human resource management. In the words of Oloyede and Oyedele (2009), human resource management lack of physical structure or infrastructure is a challenge to professional football league clubs in Nigeria. Facilities are of major concern in football management by managers. Without adequate facilities, no meaning football performances can be

achieved. Lack of infrastructure constitutes a challenge in human resource management to professional football league clubs globally (Omuojiue, 2014). According to Nwosu (2015), poor football facilities and equipment constitute challenge to the club performance. Most club managers are not very abreast, that football facilities are very keys to performances. Shuaibu (2019), opined that, insufficient and poor quality football infrastructure, constitute a challenge to human resource management of professional football league clubs in Nigeria for effective performance, players need equipment and facilities in sufficient number and quality to improve their performance in Nigeria professional football league clubs.

It is worthy of note, finance is responsible for lack of infrastructure development. Nwosu (2015) asserted that finance has been a serious challenge to the development of infrastructure for the club. He stated that finance is a challenge to talent management, recruitment and selection of payers, and it has impacts on the leadership development and practices of the club, for quite sometime now. It has also been established according to Oninaboka (2016), that the career advancement of Rivers United players been delayed due to lack of funds. This is a challenge to career advancement of players. For instance, staff compensations and benefits have been delayed unduly.

Finance or fundings is the engine that gives the impetus and it is the instrument that spurs the total management processes of an organization. According to Morakinyo and Aluko (2009) football finance is crucial to football organizations, and it constitute a serious human resource

management challenge in developing and undeveloped nations, of which Nigeria football league club is inclusive. Al-Ghazali (2009) and Eboh (2010), claimed that the ownership and funding of the twenty clubs in the Nigeria Professional League clubs by various state government as owners and some private persons, is a problem militating against the growth and development of the league system. Funding is the brain behind every successful organization, football club inclusive. Football clubs seemed to be underfunded and the danger is that the game goes on the decline. Funding is a serious challenge to football club management. Finance by these assertions poses serious challenges, danger and risk to the assumed good production expected of a football team.

Other Human resource management challenges of professional football league-based clubs in Nigeria are: tardiness and absenteeism (Darsara, 2013 and Orunaboka, 2016). They asserted that tardiness and absenteeism are challenges of human resource management of professional league-based club, especially, in developing and under-developed nations of the world. These challenges are capable of affecting the smooth management of players, performance in the football clubs, if nothing is done.

Another human resource management challenge of professional football league clubs in Nigeria is "Win at Home at all cost syndrome" (Iwuala, 2016). He posited that the worst problem affecting Nigerian league, is win at home at all cost syndrome. There was a match at Enugu involving Enugu Rangers International and Heartland of Owerri at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium. In that

encounter, rangers were up by a lone goal and the Heartland boys were pressurizing for the much needed equalizer. When there was an anxious moment in Ranger eighteen yard box a disgruntled official of Rangers threw another ball inside the pitch, thus, two round objects would be identified inside the pitch, and the referee would blow for an obstruction. How can you call this a professional football? After the match, when Ranger official were asked why they were throwing balls inside the pitch when play was going on, they replied that what they did at Enugu was a child's play compared to what the officials of Heartland did to them when they visited Owerri. The question remains: Must every team win at home?

Eboh and Boye (2014), Musa (2007) and Enenta (2015) have it that one of the human resource management challenges of professional football league clubs in Nigeria is appointment of Team Psychologists for the professional football clubs in Nigeria. Professional football leagues all over the globe, are associated with the employment of seasoned sports or football psychologists for all round development of the team. Sadly, a close look at the Nigerian league reveals that there is a dearth of team psychologists in most Nigerian teams, participating in professional football league. If you do not have money to employ a psychologist for the team, it means you cannot be able to run a professional football team and what do you do? Back out!!!

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The analyzes in this essay highlighted indiscipline, poor remuneration, sign on fees, match bonuses, medicals – as inadequate welfare services; poor quality officiating and disloyalty; lack of

infrastructure and finance; tardiness, absenteeism and win at home at all cost syndrome as human resource management challenges of professional football league clubs in Nigeria. In other words, what we termed professional football in Nigeria is not in the real sense of it. It is the view of this paper, that a vibrant administrator is employed by the owners of clubs, and league management companies (LMCs) should display and live to the responsibility of sanctioning clubs that did not live up to their responsibilities of paying salaries as well as remedying other challenges identified in this paper. The glorious days of professional football league can be restored if club owners and managers employ knowledgeable management staff, who know the value of football and obey the rules of the organization.

There is a significant improvement that the NPFL now has a deal with Super Sport, whereby six matches every week are televised for the whole world to view. This will go a long way in curbing crazy behaviors of stakeholders to matches. As a way of stemming or reducing violence in football engagements, the LMC and the management of each professional football clubs should arrange lectures, seminars and workshops, where football fans will be educated on the need to shun violence. These identified human resources management challenges of professional football league club are, no doubts, capable of affecting management and players performances in their clubs, if nothing is done.

References

- Adesina, D. (2017). *Managing Human Resource: Productivity, Quality Work, Life, Profits*. UI Venture Press.
- Anibeze, O. (2008). "More Forces Speak Against Corruption in the Nigeria League". *Vanguard Newspaper*, Nov.17, 51.
- Babajide, A. (2012). The Nigeria Premier League is best in Africa. What a Charade Retrieved from: *C:/users/BRAIN/Documents/the-Nigeria-premier-league*.
- Darsara, F.M. (2013). *Sports Management: Challenges in the Management of Football in the Case of Iran*. Unpublished Master Thesis, Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa, North Cyprus.
- Eboh, L.O. (2010). *Sustainable Football Development: the Role of Football Coaches in Achieving the Millennium Goals*. A paper presented at a Football Coaching Clinic/Workshop held at Government College, Ughelli on 13th – 17th September, 2010.
- Eboh, L.O. (2015). *Assessing Human Resources in Sport Industry in Nigeria*. A paper presented at College of Education. Afrize unpublished.
- Eboh, L.O. and Boye, T.E. (2014). *Need and Utilization of Sports Psychologists in the Psychological Preparation of College of Education Athletes Towards Sport Enhancement*. *Journal of New Trends in Teacher Education (JONTIE)*, 1(2), 130 – 139.
- Enenta, I. (2015). *The Problem with the Nigerian Professional Football League* Retrieved from <http://naijafulbolcom/2015/1/06>
- Erhinyodavwe, I.J. (2018). *Organisational Risks as Determinants for Football League Management Performance in Nigeria*. Ph.D Thesis. Unpublished Delta State University, Abraka.
- Fasan, C.O. (2009). *Person-Organisation Fit Model Challenge to Leadership and Personal Selection in sports Organisation*. *Nigeria Journal of Sport Management*. Vol.3, 1 – 12.
- Garba, M. and Njidda, M. (2009). *Impact of human resource management on productivity of professional football league club side of Nigeria*. *Proceeding of the 40th Conference of NAPHER_SD*, 134 – 143.
- Guardian News Website – *Dwindling Fortunes of Nigeria's Premier League*. Retrieved from Ngrguardiannews.com 2016.
- Ikhioya, O.S.A. (2001). *Functional Strategies for Effective Sport Management Practices*. *Guides for Sport Managers & Administrators*.
- Iwuola, H. (2016). *Nigeria: Preparing for the 2015/2016 Gb Premier Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*. Ibadan.
- Johnson, P. (2009). *HRM in Changing Organisational Context in Collins, D.G. & Wood, G. (Eds), Human Resource Management: A critical approach*. London: Routledge.
- Kingsley, A.D. (2011). *Strategic Human Resource Management within a Resource – Capability View of the Firm*. *Journal of Management Studies*. 2(33), 213 – 133.

- Morakinyo, E. O. and Aluko, E. O. (2009). Sports funding and marketing as predictors of sports development in selected Sports Federations of the Federal Ministry of Sports and Social Development in Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Sport management*. 3, 54 - 65
- Musa, G.Y. (2007). Resource allocation and Performance of Professional Service Clubs in Northern Nigeria. Proceedings of Nigerian Association for Physical, Healthy Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance. 1(1), 68 – 74.
- Nigerian Football League (2015). The Nigeria Football League Statutes. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/nigeria_nfootballleaguestatus. Retrieved 18 December 2015.
- Nwosu, O.C. (2015). Strategies Towards the Rejuvenation of Enugu Rangers International Football Club in Nigeria. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sport and Health*. 2(1), 196.
- Nwosu, S.D. & Ugwrerua, L.O. (2015). Human Resource Management and Performance; a review and research agenda. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. 3(8), 263-76.
- Omuojine, K.C. (2014). Dispute Resolution in Nigeria Football: The Need for a National Dispute Resolution Chamber. *African Sport Law and Business Bulletin* (21).
- Orunaboka, B. (2016). Chukwu Wants Government to Divest from Clubs. *The Guardian* Thursday, august, 23 p.59.
- Salami, I.A. (2009). Evolution of Sports Development in Nigeria and Strategies for Implementation. *Nigerian Journal of Sport Management*. Vol.3, 203 – 210.
- Shuaibu, P. (2019). “Don’t spoil Football for Edo People”. *Sunday Vanguard* March 17, p.46.