



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: A
ARTS & HUMANITIES - PSYCHOLOGY
Volume 16 Issue 5 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

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GJHSS-A Classification : FOR Code: 321404



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Harnessing Diversity through Youth Sport for Sustainable Development

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Abstract- This paper examines the place of youth sport towards harnessing diversity through youth sport for sustainable development. The theory used in this research paper was anchored on functionalist theory propounded by Emile Durkheim in 1915. This paper also attempt to examine youth sport as an inevitable tool for national integration which all parts of the nation, societal systems are able to enjoy regardless of language, tribe, culture, religion and even socio-economic status. Sport and development are naturally complementary processes that can enable government and other stakeholders of sustainable development to build a better world. Youth sport is a powerful social pivot, a strong social connector and a vector that brings people of different socio-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual diversities together. Youth sport is successfully used to promote social inclusion which provide respite in the periods of conflict, build trust and establish bridges between groups in conflict; it also contribute to peace building in post conflict situations and promote a culture of youth empowerment. The paper also suggested strategies to harness diversities with emphasis on culture and active participation of the government. Finally, the paper recommended that stakeholders should ensure proper attention and investment of resources in sports sector so that youth sport and activities at all levels will be meaningfully integrated as major uncompromising tool for harnessing the heritage of cultural diversities and to achieve sustainable development agenda in our societies.

Keywords: youth, sport, diversity, development, sustainable development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sport in Nigeria has grown from a humble beginning as an entertainment and recreational part time activity to a prominent phenomenon and a lucrative gold mine, braking cultural differences among tribes and regions through its impart; and harnessing our diversities by its influence felt in all spheres of lives of the citizenry Therefore, it is pertinent to acknowledge youth sports as a veritable tool indispensable for sustainable development in Nigeria as a nation-state. The enormous potential of sport, its

global reach, its universal language, its impact on communities in general, and young people in particular, is a fact and is increasingly recognized around the world. The possibility to play and enjoy recreation and sport in a safe and healthy environment is a human right embedded in numerous international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The fundamental role of Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace was re-emphasized in UN Resolution A/69/L.5 adopted by Member States on 16 October 2014. The resolution “encourages Member States to give sport due consideration in the context of the post-2015 development agenda”.

The Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General on the post-2015 Agenda also recognizes that sport plays a significant role in youth education and life-long learning and contributes to ensure healthier lives.

Nigerians are sports loving people with very high and enthusiastic appetite for sport participation at every level. Success at competitions creates a euphoric atmosphere with an injection of vibrancy and pride in the citizens. Conversely, poor performance by Nigerian athletes at international competitions results in a lingering sourness and a contagious sadness that envelope everybody with negative effect on their health, psyche and activities. Sport is therefore as important to Nigerians as the basic necessities of life, like food, clothing and shelter. Consequently, sport has become an important aspect of the Nigerian culture due to its popularity amongst the citizenry.

The Nigeria State recognizes the power of sports and had used it to pursue its foreign policy and diplomatic agenda as well as a pivot to foster national unity and socio-cultural integration. This is evidenced in cases such as:

- The boycott of the 1978 Commonwealth Games by Nigeria in protest against the apartheid regime in South Africa.
- The hosting of the 1973 All Africa Games after the Nigerian civil war to demonstrate to the world that Nigeria is united, safe and secure.

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- The introduction of the National Sports Festival in 1973 as a means of fostering unity and cultural integration after the Nigerian civil war and a host of others.

Sports has therefore contributed to the oneness of the geographical entity called Nigeria and has equally brought about our binding spirit harnessing our diversities, sports has detribalized Nigeria and buried ethnocentrism as implicated in selection of competent and skilled players from all parts of the country.

Several cultural benefits abound in sports. Sports generally help to develop a strong and positive community identity. Since cultural diversity is dependent on community, it is imperative to mention that youth sport contributes to the unification, integration or cohesion of the identity of any community. It is exciting to meet people from different ethnic groups and nations who speak different languages and yet brought together through sports. During sporting events like the Globacom, Olympics and world cup soccer, people display their national costumes and country colors in the form of flags, shirts and other visual things. This helps people to learn from and appreciate each other's culture and bring them together to harness cultural diversity for sustainable development.

Sport brings people from different cultural backgrounds together to put away all other differences and unanimously work towards a common developmental goal. During Nigeria Global com Premiere league, athletes come from diverse cultural backgrounds to participate; they are brought to live together as a team (family). During this process of living together in unity, a culturally diverse community is created where people are free to share their culture with other people. This show how powerful sport is in harnessing cultural diversity for peace, unity and sustainable development.

In an act of friendliness, sportsmen come together to play games in order to raise money for other worthy causes, mainly charities. An example of such event was a FIFA soccer game that helped to raise money for tsunami victims. The game brought soccer players from different countries as a sign of diversity to help other people in need. People who participated in the event would definitely have experienced a unique thing about someone else's culture.

During sport competitions, people travel from different communities even from different countries to cheer their teams irrespective of their cultural differences. For instance Nigerians at the stadium become a single family cheering the Eagles. Usually at the beginning of the world cup competition, the differences between countries are clearly marked but as time progresses the gap narrows down and differences fizzle away or almost do no longer exist. For instance, if five African teams qualify for the playoffs during a world cup and only one team advances to the next round,

people from the remaining countries would end up supporting the advancing team. It is also not surprising to see an African country cheering European or Asian teams. There have been many times when opponents exchange their jerseys as a sign of respect for their counterparts. Despite the entertainment values of sport, it is also a veritable indispensable tool in harnessing cultural diversity among people and communities for sustainable development. Sports help people to understand each other and live together in peace and harmony. Generally athletes' participation in sports contributes to holistic development where competence, autonomy and relatedness are achieved as key psychological factors that encourage sustainable development. Murray (1997) observed that the concern for applied sport psychology generally is how to improve sports performance, sustain interest of athletes and build capacity of athletes to achieve the global developmental role of sports.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF SPORTS IN NIGERIA

Informal competitive sports have their origin in villages and their ethnic groups. This humble beginning as entertainment and recreational part time activity subsequently advanced into prominent phenomenon that could no longer be ignored in the socio-political and economic life of the nation. Missionaries introduced formal sports in Nigeria and in the course of history both formal and traditional sports have evolved to be administered by management structures such as Sports Federations, Sports Councils and at the apex, the National Sports Commission. Formal sports organization started in Nigeria at about 1910 with the introduction of Empire Day competitions, which were organized on inter-schools basis. The establishment of Mission schools in different parts of Nigeria assisted in the development of sports and the introduction of new ones.

Though most of the sports were alien to Nigerians, they were welcomed because they served the common goal of recreation, entertainment, social mobilization and promotion of unity in diversity.

Nigeria's first participation in an international competition was in 1934, when the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe represented Nigeria in the 440 yards (400m) at the Commonwealth Games and Empire day competitions in London. Nigeria presented teams for the first time during the 1950 Commonwealth Games in Hamilton, Canada, the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, and the first edition of the All Africa Games in 1965, Libreville, Congo. Nigeria has since then continued to participate in these Games except the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, Canada, and the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland, as well as the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia because of political reasons that were largely

influenced by the Apartheid Regime in South Africa at that time. Nigeria did not participate in the 1976 Olympics and the 1986 Commonwealth Games because of the African boycott of the Games. In the same vein, Nigeria could not participate in the 1998 Commonwealth Games because she was under suspension by the Commonwealth.

Sports administration and practice in Nigeria have taken a new and great dimension, thereby becoming a big commercial venture and employer of labour.

The domination of the sporting world by the Russians and their allies coupled with their unique organizational structure of sports influenced the Federal Government of Nigeria to directly involve herself in the control, regulation and promotion of sports. The outcome of this decision was the establishment of the National Sports Council in 1962.

Administratively, Sports is administered at the State level through Sports Councils and at the National level through the National Sports Commission. Historical evolution of the National Sports Commission is as stated hereunder. The promulgation of Decree 34 of 1971 formalized and legalized the National Sports Commission (NSC) as the apex Federal Government agency to control, regulate and organize sports in Nigeria. In 1975, the National Sports Commission was elevated to the status of a Ministry with a Cabinet Minister.

However, the promulgation of Decree 7 of 1991 saw the reemergence of the National Sports Commission as a Parastatal under the Ministry of Youth and Sport. In 1995, the National Sports Commission was scrapped and the administration of sports was once again transferred to the Ministry. By December 2006, the Obasanjo Administration reverted the then Federal Ministry of Sports and Social Development (FMSSD) to the National Sports Commission. Prior to this development, the then Ministry had recognized 34 National Sports Federations. The oscillation of the administration of sports between the Federal Ministry of Sports and the National Sports Commission was a major factor militating against the desired growth and development of Sports in Nigeria. Sports management structure suffered some set back as a result of poor or non-implementation of the 1989 National Sports Policy, which was Nigeria's first Sports Policy.

Football in Nigeria was introduced by Missionaries and was played in schools and by traders. Clubs evolved thereafter culminating in the establishment of a regulatory body, the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) in 1945, with Mr Muriford as its Chairman. Decree 101 of 1991 gave legal backing to the NFA and the status of a parastatal under the then Federal Ministry of Youth, Sports & Social Development. The expansion of football activities in Nigeria brought about the establishment of the Nigeria Premier League

Board to administer football at professional club level. The National Institute of Sports (NIS) was established in 1974 and attained the status of a parastatal through Decree 31 of 1992 as an institution dedicated to training and research in all aspects of sports.

III. CONCEPT OF SPORT

The concept of sport is varying both in its definitions. For instance, in a development context the definition of sport usually includes a broad and spectrum of activities suitable to people of all ages and abilities, with an emphasis on the positive values of sport. In 2003, the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace defined sport, for the purposes of sustainable development, as "all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games." This definition has been accepted by many proponents of Sport for Development and Peace. It is the working definition of sport for the purposes of this research (UN-ATFSDP, 2013). To Ralph (2014) sport is an activity that involve physical exertion, skill or hand-eye coordination as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through organizations.

Lyon, Kenyon and Mcpherson (1999) explaining the nature of sport posit that sport is a game occurrence or event. A game is any playful activity from which the outcome is determined through physical skill, energy, strategy or chance employed singly or in combination. Sport is an institutionalized game, a social system, a competitive activity characterized by relatively persistent patterns of social organization which is not characterized by a universally accepted definition (Mixon, 1984). Singer (1976) also saw sports as a human activity loaded with specific administrative organization and historical background of rules and regulations. For the purpose of this research, the researchers defined sport a demonstration of physical fitness to improve personal enjoyment, health and physical satisfaction. It can be undertaken within the formal arrangements of sporting organizations and competitions, or as an informal social or recreational activity where rules are less important and outcomes may vary.

IV. CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

It is imperative to note that the phenomenon of development transcends economic growth, which was erroneously considered by classical economists to be synonymous to development, basically because of the major role of economic forces in engendering societal development. However, in recent years, a number of economists have come to acknowledge that gross

statistics sometimes obscure the essence of the problem of development, because development is essentially about people and their 'quality and quantity' of life (Abah, 2000). It is in this light that Agba referencing Cairncross as posited in Abah (2000), that "the key to development lies in the minds of the people, in the institutions in which their thinking finds expression and in the play of opportunity on ideas and institutions". This idealistic conception entails that the nature, quality, quantity, dimension and rate of development of any society is predicated on the nature of the ideas, values, norms, etc that constitute its non-material culture. Development, therefore, entails not only improvement in economic growth and/or material possession and favorable living conditions of a people, but also, an improvement in the knowledge/ideas, values, norm and the entire non-material culture of a people (Agba, 2012). That is to say that development, pertaining to culture, consist the activity of removing the cultural traits that impedes on efforts to a higher living standard and to adopt and improve on cultural traits that will gear towards higher living standard and good quality of life of a people.

V. CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition of sustainable development which may be useful in this research is that proposed by Brundtland Commission Report (1987) is defined as the *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs* (Cerin, 2006; Dernbach, 1998; Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011). This definition does not limit the scope of sustainability. The explanation does, however, touch on the importance of intergenerational equity. This concept of conserving resources for future generations is one of the major features that distinguish sustainable development policy from traditional environmental policy, which also seeks to internalize the externalities of environmental degradation. The overall goal of sustainable development is the long-term stability of the economy and environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process (Rachel, 2015).

In the application of this definition of sustainable development, one issue that is concerns is the substitutability of capital. There are several types of capital, such as: social, natural, and man-made capital.

The definition of weak sustainable development explains that only the aggregate level of capital matters: man-made, or manufactured, capital is an adequate alternative to natural capital. It is on this viewed that Stoddart (2011) opined that any strong sustainability, must recognizes and appreciate the unique features of natural resources that cannot be replaced by manufactured capital

Barbiar (1987), in his definition of sustainable development, is concerned with the plight of the populations of the third world. His focus is on combating the pervasive and deepening poverty and improving the quality of life. According to Barbier, the concept of sustainable economic development as applied to the third world... is therefore directly concerned with increasing the material standards of living of the poor at the grassroots level, which can be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, education services, health-care, sanitation and water supply, emergency stocks and cash, etc, and only indirectly concerned with economic growth at the aggregate national level. In general terms, the primary objective is reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor, through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption and social instability. To Goodland and Ledec (1987) Sustainable development is here defined as a pattern of social and structural economic transformation (i.e. development) which optimized the economic and social benefits available in the present, without jeopardizing the likely potential for similar benefits in the future.

A primary goal of sustainable development is to achieve a reasonable (however defined) and equitably distributed level of economic wellbeing that can be perpetuated continually for many generations. CIDA (1992) outlined five aspects to the concept of sustainability:

- *Economic sustainability* – appropriate economic policies, efficient resources allocation and a more equitable control over resource, and increased productive capacity among the poor.
- *Social sustainability* – equitable income distribution, participation of intended beneficiaries.
- *Cultural sustainability* – sensitivity to cultural factors including cultural diversity, recognition of values conducive to development.
- *Political sustainability* – premised on the assurance of human rights, promotion of democratic development and good governance.
- *Environmental sustainability* – managing and protecting ecosystem to maintain diversity of life in both human – managed and natural system and protecting the environment from pollution to maintain the quality of land, air and water. It would

be necessary to appraise or assess post-independence Africa in these core aspects of sustainable development (Nwakaire, 2013).

For the purpose of this research, the researchers hereby define sustainable development as developmental process which aimed at enhancing human life and expanding public and individual's well-being. It is development that enables us to understand ourselves and the world at large. However, the problems we face are complex and serious and we can't address them in the same way we created them because the future generations will meet their own needs and find means to redress them.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

a) *Functionalist theory*

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) conceived and developed functionalist theory (see Durkheim 1915, 1964); Durkheim was himself one of the first sociologists to make use of scientific and statistical techniques in sociological research (1951).

Functionalist theory focuses on the ways that sports contribute to the smooth operation of societies, communities, organizations, and groups enhancing integration. This is why a functionalist approach is popular among people interested in preserving the status quo in society for development. They want to understand how sports contribute to the smooth operation of the social systems in which they have been successful. Many people connected with organized competitive sports also prefer functionalist theory because it emphasizes the "functions" of sports and supports the conclusion that sports are a source of inspiration for integration of individuals and societies. The importance of youth sport is all encompassing therefore raising reasons to study it as a factor that can harness diversities in Nigeria for sustainable development. In application, Popularized forms of functionalist theory often are used when people in positions of power make decisions about sports and sport programmes at national and local levels. For example, a functionalist analysis of sports in society would support the following actions: promoting the development and growth of organized youth sports (to build values and integrate society's diversity), funding sports programmes in schools and communities (to promote organizational loyalty and attachments to schools and communities as a means of youth empowerment), developing sport opportunities for girls and women (to increase achievement motivation among girls and women), including sports in military training (to increase military preparedness and the fitness of soldiers), and staging sports festivals (to build national goodwill and unity). This theory is relevant to this research because it maintain the values that preserve

stability and order in individual's social life for sustainable development in our societies.

b) *Youth sports and sustainable development*

A plethora of research show that all over the world, youth sports have become an important and integral part of sustainable development, youth empowerment and important part of social and cultural integration among youths (Coakley, 1998; Coakley, 2011). Research reveal that youth sport has been integrated into community schemes to tackle crime and drug abuse among youths and ensure sustainable development through proper implementation of good policies (Andy & Ivan, 2004). The growing concern about the future growth and development of today's youth all over the world has motivated researchers to increase their interest in positive youth development programs through sports as one of the fastest avenue for sustainable development (Fraser-thomas, Cote & Deakin, 2005). However, diversifying youth sports is critical in youth sports development to ensure carryover of values to adult life and adult sport participation as sustainable development (Hill, 1988; Hill & Hamsen, 1988).

c) *Cultural diversity*

Culture: Culture denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about life and attitudes to life. This assertion serves a clarification function because it presents culture as consisting of the non-material traits such as: ideas, norms, values and material traits such as: cloths, houses, etc. This underscores the fact that nonmaterial cultural traits determine not only the nature and quality of material cultural traits, but also, how material culture is utilized or handled.

Cultural diversity therefore is the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. Culture itself is usually defined in two perspectives: a narrow viewpoint, which focuses on cultural products and expressions, such as traditional dance, theatre, sculptures or buildings, and a broader definition, which views culture as "the way we live". The latter, who applied in this study, is all inclusive of human endeavour. Culture is a constructed phenomenon, created through the human endeavours to transform nature and the environment in order to sustain and enrich life. Culture is transferred through human interaction, from trans-generational ones (e.g. through family and ethnic group) to inter-group ones (cultural interaction). In this transfer process, culture is often adapted to new circumstances or restructured, e.g. to address new beliefs, opportunities, a crisis or a threat.

Cultural identity defines people's cultural bonding, the group to which they belong. Within mobilization tactics, cultural identity is usually portrayed as a fixed characteristic, which must be defended against "others" who are generally viewed as competing for the same resources, power or status (Kaufman, 2006).

National governments tend to emphasize national identity to increase social cohesion, national consciousness and nation building. The challenge then is to make diverse cultural identities an integral part of the national one. This is particularly important in a country like Nigeria which has about 370 different ethnic groups (Alubo, 2006). Cultural identity implies freedom of association with groups, communities and ideologies which can go beyond national boundaries. People can and do have multiple identities that are complementary, e.g. ethnic, social, gender, religious, work. Acceptance of cultural identity within national identity prevents stifling of social relationships and promotes dynamic interactions, creativity, critical thinking and acceptance of history as a shared legacy and the future as shared aspirations (Edewor, 1993; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2002). Suppression of cultural identity by national governments or inequity in recognition can lead to resistance, conflict and civil war. Recognition of cultural identities through proportional representation in institutional arrangements easily entrenches cultural identities and does not motivate for national integration. This may increase tensions, rather than resolve them (Kotze, 2002).

VII. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPORT AND CULTURE

It is very crucial to acknowledge that, culture and sports share vital relationships. For instance, culture is created by man through the process of adjustment to life in the social setting. Sport was originally conceived in order to divert people's attention from rigors of daily life. Culture is universal and so found in any human society. Sport is also universal, found in any human society. This implies that, as culture is a household affair of every nation throughout the world, sport is also a household affair of every society. This is because, it cuts across all societies. These also attest to the reason why government spends millions of naira on culture and sports promotion through Sport events such as: Olympic Games, Nation's Cup, sports festivals and tournaments. Sports and culture are instruments of national and international unity and cohesion. According to Oyeneye and shorem (2000), culture does not only shape the personality of the members of a society, it also controls and directs their behaviours and relationships. The principle of sportsmanship in sports is similar to this. The principle of sportsmanship expresses an aspiration ethos that the activity be enjoyed for its

own sake, with proper concentration for fairness, ethics, respect and sense of fellowship with one competitor. Sportsmanship in basic sense may be taken as conforming to the rules of sport which is meant to control, shape and direct human conduct as culture does. Typically, sportsmanship is regarded as three related and perhaps overlapping concept: fair play, sportsmanship and character (Onifade, 2001).

Fair play refers to all participants having equitable chance to pursue victory and acting towards others in honest, straight forward, and firm in dignified manner, even when others do not play fairly. Character refers to those dispositions, values and habits that determine the way a person normally respond to decisions, fear challenges, opportunities, failure and success which are typically seen in polite behaviours especially towards others such as helping an opponent or shaking hands after a match or even exchange of sport vest (Onifade, 2001). The principle of sportsmanship is associated with interpersonal way of treating others and being treated fairly, maintaining self-control in dealing with others and having respect for both authority and opponents. There are facets of sportsmanship that are similar to culture. These are as listed below:

- Respect and concern for rules and officials
- Respect and concern for social convention (i.e. shaking hands)
- Respect and concern for the opponent (i.e., lending one's equipment to the opponent, agreeing to play even if the opponent is late and not taking advantage of an injured player).

Avoiding poor attitudes towards participation, e.g. "not adopting win – at – all cost" approach and not showing temper after a mistake (Akinsanmi & Oloyede, 2001). Culture is a value system. Cultural values imply those general orientations in socio cultural systems that are not always obvious to its members, but they are implicit in actual behaviour. The value system of any society often reflects in their sports participation. For instance, health is highly valued in the American culture. Athletes' cultural perspective may cause variations in their causal perception and subjective goals either positively or negatively. Research on impact of acculturation on adolescent athletes' motivation among Mexican Americans reveal that acculturation positively influenced their perception of competence within the competitive sports setting (Ryska, 2001) this implies that cultural consideration and acculturation are veritable tools for adolescent sports development and sustainable development.

Markus and Kilayama(1991) examined sports orientation across Eastern and western cultural perspectives of athletes, they observe that there exist variation in their sport orientation. Athletes with Eastern cultural perspective adopt task oriented approach in

their achievement setting while athletes with Western cultural perspective adopt an outcome-based approach within the achievement setting. Task-oriented approach is shown through group affiliation and striving for social acceptance to emphasize in-group harmony. While outcome-based approach is shown by demonstrating high personal ability and individuality. A similar research on achievement motivation across culture reveals that there was significant cultural impact on the achievement motivation among Anglo American marathon runners and Japanese runners that makes significant difference (Hayashi & Weiss, 1994)

VIII. CULTURAL CONTENTS IN THE SPORTS POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

Cultural content refers to those aspects of the sports policy which directly or indirectly have to do with values, beliefs, ideas, attitudes and social institutions characteristic of the Nigerian people. The culture of an organization or a country is usually known through its policy or objectives. The National sports policy (NSP, 2009) has the following objectives:

- To develop sport to become the instrument of national unity
- To utilize achievements in sports to boost the country's image in the committee of nations
- Use sport as the avenue to minimize antisocial behaviour
- Attract major international sporting events to Nigeria and exploit their benefits for tourism and economy.

In the policy, government recognizes sports as the vehicle for culture. She appreciates the significance of sport to minimize antisocial behaviours such as human trafficking, kidnapping, alcohol abuse, school dropout, drug abuse, hooliganism, terrorism, stealing, violence, and fraud. All these vices are commonly found with idle young people. The policy also recognizes sports as the means of preserving national cultural value, which is unity. Sports are the unification instruments for people or peoples within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable at long run. It promotes sport in order to foster social harmony and economic growth. National unity is an essential part of national value system and is a component of nation building and integration.

Akinsanmi and Oloyede (2001) argued that, sports and culture contribute to character building, discipline, economy, ideology, patriotism, education, mental development, human communication, physical fitness and health. These attributes have been clearly stated in the national sports policy (2009). Another major advantage of sport is that it establishes the equality of all participants through the respect of a corpus of norms. Irrespective of a player's origin, religion, ethnicity or social background, the "rules of the game" apply to

all, and in the same way. Thus, it can break down stereotypes pertaining to gender and disability, galvanizing positive change and drawing individuals together, building bridges and promoting peace and reconciliation, as well as providing facilities and access to community services. Importantly, sport also plays a significant role in promoting positive lifestyles among youth and offering constructive activities that can contribute to their integration in society. Sport programmes engaging youth can lead to a reduction in negative patterns of behavior by increasing self-confidence and self-respect which enhance integration and inclusion.

Furthermore, the functions of sports and culture today have also grown in economic and political dimensions and many countries now use them as the legitimate part of foreign policy and as the vehicle to show one country's mood towards another. For instance, Nigerian boycotted the Edinburgh 1986 Commonwealth Games of the British rugby team that went on playing tour of apartheid South Africa and used that to protest the apartheid policy perpetuated against the blacks of South Africa who actually owned the land of South Africa. Sports epitomize the ethical values in a country. A country whose athletes performed excellently in any international sports would be given an extensive media coverage, just like what has just happened to the under – sixteen junior world soccer champion and the female national team that attracted government attention for winning the female World Cup. This throws the country in a limelight, especially if the country is not relatively well known globally.

Onifade, (2001) explained that Nigeria experienced prestige, status and respectability, when her soccer team won the maiden edition of the under sixteen junior world soccer championship in China in 1985. The same thing happened when the under-sixteen soccer championship was won by Nigeria in September 2007, as a result of winning the championship, the players moved from the low income class rapidly into the high social class and become instant millionaires, while the name Nigeria was printed in the media all over the world. Onifade (2001) further explained that, sports competition, seminars and meetings of various types provide the opportunity for exchange and fertilize ideas and knowledge, which in turn would be of immense benefit, in educating the citizens of the country.

IX. CONCLUSION

Youth Sports obviously is a strong vector, a viable agent and a veritable tool in harnessing our diversities for a sustainable social, economic and political development. Sports have been used by different countries as legitimate instruments for foreign policy and a vehicle to show the country's mood and value system, unification instrument for the people or

peoples within the state so that they can remain politically, economically and culturally stable. Thus, sports harness culture to promote social harmony and development. The organization of culture also depends on its value system. Sport is an indispensable tool for social integration, cohesion and transformation. The sport sector is undeniably a key partner in the planning and implementation of the sustainable development agenda. It shall continue to be recognized as an important contributor to a better and more peaceful world, in close partnership with governments and other members of civil society.

X. RECOMMENDATION

The responsibility of sustaining the positive cultural values in their diversities is a collective function. From the family as the first unit of community to all stake holders in ministries of culture as well as the government must make sure all hands are set on deck to revive our cultural heritage and build sportsmanship in our youths to harnessing this rich diversity for national integration, foster unity and cohesion for sustainable development.

The government should sponsor cultural festivals with sport competitions at grand finale; encourage the inclusive participation of youths in sports and cultural activities right from the cradle at primary school level. Traditional rulers should encourage intercommunity sports competitions accompanied by cultural exhibitions by participating communities. Nigeria is blessed richly in cultural heritage, its diversity we must harness and youth sport is a veritable tool for this all important project of sustainable development.

The sport sector is undeniably a key partner in the planning and implementation of the next global development agenda. It shall continue to be recognized as an important contributor to a better and more peaceful world, in close partnership with governments and other members of civil society.

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