

THE GRAND COALITION GOVERNMENT IN KENYA: A RECIPE FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

Numerous social theories have been explored to unearth the role of sports in society but consensus remains remote. Political parties and politicians present their manifestos to the electorates on the eve of elections to solicit for political candidacy and eventual incumbency. Kenyan political parties/politicians just like in other parts of the world have championed the youth agenda through sports. Some of the electoral promises however are never implemented fully, with some of the youth agenda fading as soon as the election-eve period is over. This paper discusses some of the social theories which are tenable when censoring sports and politics at international and national level. The pledges on sports development made during the controversial 2007 general elections by the two main political parties in Kenya, Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) are weighed against session paper No.3 of 2005 on Sports Development. The recommendations which the Grand Coalition Government needs to embrace for the sake of Sports Development in Kenya are made.

Key Words: Grand-Coalition, Politics, Recipe, Sports-Development, PNU, ODM

Introduction

Sports and politics are interwoven phenomenon which has had rich historical antecedents. For instance, ancient Greece used sports to enhance fitness of their citizens for war and to demonstrate their superiority over the city-states. They gave large incentives to successful athletes who brought prestige to their cities (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989). In the early part of Roman era, sports was used for military fitness and in the later years, the ruling elite produced sport-like events to entertain and thereby control the masses.

In Africa, sporting activities (traditional genre) had numerous and diverse objectives ranging from preparation for tribal wars, initiation, payment of homage to the gods, fitness for daily living and economic activities, etc. However, the objectives of traditional sports changed with the advent and introduction of Western sporting traditions. Sports in the international front and through political manifestations have had the following overlying values or objectives.

1. To improve individual physical fitness in preparation for national defence especially during period of international tension and pending an outbreak of war.
2. To promote national identity and social status in the international community.
3. To develop national unity and feelings of national hood.
4. To foster personal prestige for individual politicians and national leaders.
5. To maintain social control and a means of social policy implementation.

6. To attempt political indoctrination as a suppressed populace as in the former USSR with sport organized primarily through the highly politicized Trade Union movement.
7. To use sport as political leverage such as through sporting boycotts as in the case of 1976, 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games and the commonwealth games in Edinburgh in 1986.
8. As a means of gaining support for specific political parties from highly publicized actions of the Nazi party in Germany in the 1930's to the less public activities of the Gaelic Sport Organization in contemporary Ireland (McPherson, *etal*, 1989, Monnington, 1997, Coakley, 2001).

A number of social theories have been utilized to justify the existence of sports in the society. According to the functionalist theories, sport is used to promote common values essential to the integration and development of society. It is further argued that, all groups strive to maintain the social order and that sport can facilitate this process. However, critics of functionalistic theories contend that functionalist overstates the positive consequence of sport, ignores that sport serves the needs of some people more than those of others and does not acknowledge that sport are social constructions (Coakley, 2001). On the other hand, the conflict perspective is based on the premise that the domination of particular groups either within a country or among countries depend on having control over economic and political resources. However, critics of conflict theory contends that the theory overstates the influence of economic forces in society, assumes that people who have economic power shape sport to meet their interests and ignores that sport can be a site for creative and liberating experience. Conflict then is generated among groups for control of these resources and thereby acquiring power in the decision making process (McPherson, *etal*, 1989 Coakley, 2001).

Figurational theory appreciates that social order is based on interdependencies among individuals and groups' connections between people take the form of social figurations. Critics of figurational theory argue that it gives too little attention to problems and struggles that affect day to day lives, understates the immediate personal consequences of oppressive power relations and gives little attention to the experiences of women and gender inequities (Coakley, 2001). Unlike other social theories, figurational theory gives close attention to sport in society. The concept of figurations has been especially useful in studies of the complex economic, political and social processes associated with global sports (Maguire, 1999). Figurational theory will be utilized to explain why political parties in Kenya have sports as one of their campaign strategies.

Values of Sports in Kenya

While emphasizing on the fact that Kenyan's indigenous people engaged in a wide range of traditional sports, Stuart (1993) observed that

Sport has always been part of life in Africa, but in the past people played different games and took part in different sports. Young people wrestled or fought friendly stick fights. Young heard boys rode races on their animals. Those who lived near water enjoyed swimming and canoe racing, dancing was always popular, and some children even rode to beggars. Those who were successful in traditional sport had high status. Then, some the winners were admired and respected (P. 77)

Most of the modern games were introduced into Kenya by the British colonialists, settlers and missionaries in the first half of the 20th century. Some of the African (native) activities were termed as evil and salvage and therefore discouraged/neglected. Consequently, during pre-independence and post independence Kenya, the value attached to sports keeps on wobbling depending on the government of the day. However, the seriousness of the government as far as sporting activities were concerned was reflected in the different development plans which have continued to underscore the importance of sports in Kenya's development. According to Mahlman, Asembo & Korir (1993), Kenya's second national development plan (1970-1974) emphasized the values of participation in sports as: physical fitness, good health, nation building, co-operation, capacity for excellence and positive image. Some of these values have been able to transcend different development plans in Kenya.

Indeed, Mwisukha, Njororai and Onywera (2003) showed that sports in Kenya has contributed immensely to national, economic, social, education, health and political development. The authors contend that the sport has continued to play an invaluable role of enhancing political tranquility in Kenya and has been a neutral tool of minimizing political tension and differences thereby paving the way for collective effort toward the development of various sectors of the country. However, it is prudent to establish the relationship between sports and political development in Kenya.

Sports and Politics in Kenya

Today sports and politics are inextricably intertwined and often used to demonstrate social, economic or political supremacy over another nation. Indeed, McPherson, *etal*, (1989) observed that themes under sport and politics at national level include: Increasing nationalism, Use of sport for political propaganda, Use of sport to encourage national integration or unity, Use of sport to foster sustaining existing social conflicts, and Increasing politicalization of the decision-making process in some or all levels.

On the other hand, Coakley (2001) observed that the nature and extent of government involvement in sports varies from one community and society to the next and government involvement occurs for one or more of the following reasons: Safe guard the public order, to maintain fitness and physical abilities among citizens, to promote prestige and power of a group community or nation, to promote sense of identity, belong and unity among citizens, to reproduce values consistent with the government ideology in a community or society., to increase support for political leaders and government, and to promote economic development in community or society

Consequently, being viewed as physically fit or as one, who associates with athletes, has become an essential aspect of the image making of politicians. Nay, politicians have also continuously capitalized on the popularity of sport in Kenya to feel their political and development agenda to their electorates and spice their political campaigns (Mwisukha, Njororai & Onywere, 2003). Secondly, political parties encourage famous athletes to endorse political candidates and even successful athletes have been recruited as political candidates. That is why (McPherson, *etal*, 1989) observed that

“How sarvy politicians use sport to enhance their political image. Sports events are a public forum and offer politicians high visibility either as part of the event or interested consumers who sit close to the action and within range of a television camera” PP.102

Indeed, Monnigton (1997) observed that African politicians have learnt from personal experiences as well as from politicians around the world that identification with sports can bring both material benefits and political credibility to nations and leaders alike. Infact the triumphant Kenyans team to the Olympic Games in 2008 brought a lot of pride, recognition and sense of identity to Kenya and its citizens. Surprisingly this success came about against a shadow of doom created by the consequences of post-election violence witnessed in the early months of 2008. The close identification of Ronald Reagan with sport and sport men and women was a classic example of a political leader endeavoring to become a sport populist, to win the hearts and minds of their electorate. In Kenya, former president Moi used to attend soccer matches involving the national team ,would preside over national athletics championships. President Kibaki is an ardent lover and player of golf while the Prime minister, Raila Odinga enjoys fanatic following of soccer matches involving national team (Harambee stars) and Gor mahia (a football team associated with a large following from luo-Nyanza, where he was born). Indeed, Raila Prime minister and presidential candidate of Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) launched his party's manifesto in 2007 after playing a soccer match against a women soccer team.

His candidature for the presidential race was endorsed by former Harambee stars (National soccer team) players. In his campaigns he borrowed a lot of analogies from soccer where he was regarded as the “captain” of the ODM team and IPSO facto in his last campaign meeting at Nyayo stadium he was bold enough to flash a “red card” to president Kibaki to signify that his term in office was over. Kenya is a democratic country which holds regular elections after every five years since 2002 with many political parties in the race. Many political parties would wish to amass votes from the youth, and they consequently use sports as a tool of campaigning. That is why Monnigton (1997) observed that”

“But the eagerness of politicians, political parties and governments to associate with sports, major sports events and in particular successful sportsmen and women clearly reveals the belief in such actions.”

Indeed, Coakley (2001) was equivocal that some athletes in the US have been able to use their celebrity status to gain popular support for the political candidacy. The most publicized example of this is Jesse Ventura, a former professional wrestler, who was elected governor of Minnesota in 1998 and flirted with the idea of running for president in 2000. The former European/African footballer of the year, George Weah, from Liberia went all the way to presidential race as presidential candidate and emerged second in Liberia.

In Kenya, the 2007 general elections showed a close contest between Party of National Unity (PNU) with President Kibaki as the presidential candidate and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) with Prime Minister Raila Odinga as its flag bearer. The outcome of the elections in favour of President Kibaki led to post-election violence where over 1,200 people were killed and over 350,000 persons became internally displaced. Consequently, a grand coalition government was formed between PNU (and affiliate parties) and ODM after the negotiations led by the team of African eminent persons led by the former UN secretary general- Koffi Annan. The purpose of this paper was to take stock of the pledges which were made by the two major political parties as far as sports is concerned. The promises /commitments on sports are unearthed from the educational sector, youth, elderly and special populations. Secondly, the researchers were out to unearth some of the omissions by both PNU and ODM on sports development and lastly., the way forward for the Grand coalition government in sports matters is suggested.

Sports under the Education Sector

It is appreciable that Kenyan government had taken a bold step to introduce free primary education (FPE) in 2003. Though marked with numerous challenges, the introduction of FPE saw the increase in involvement of pupils by 25%. However, little attention was given to co-curricular activities in primary schools (UNESCO, 2005). According to Party of National Unity (PNU) manifesto (2007), the PNU government under education had committed itself among other commitments to:

- *Improve the quality of education by providing sufficient teachers, improving school supervision and providing equipment to all primary and secondary schools, youth polytechnics and tertiary training institutions.*
- *Progress rapidly from the “free tuition” for secondary education towards free secondary education (FSE) as facilities improve and more day schools are built in densely populated areas and boarding schools in arid areas.*

It is notable from the above two commitments that PNU were not equivocal on how to improve sporting activities in educational institutions. As much as 40% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) goes to education sector, little was committed to physical education and sport. It is notable that P.E and sport activities in educational institutions are poorly taught, not supervised and equipment/facilities are not adequate. This should have been enough to warrant the Party of National Unity (PNU) to have specific commitment on physical education and sport in Kenya.

On the other hand, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) had committed its government to

- *Develop a curriculum that takes into account the social, cultural and economic needs of a democratic Kenya competing in a globalized market.*
- *Provide minimum facilities for public schools to provide ECD to all children including children with disabilities.*
- *Raise current schools curriculum to ensure that it places less emphasis on rote-learning and passing examinations and focuses on equipping the children with skills for knowledge based economy.*

Just like PNU, ODM did not address the practice of physical education and Sport in educational institutions from a specific point of view. It can only be hoped that there shall be improvement of P.E and sport facilities and change of attitude because it is not an examinable subject and only involves practical sessions at primary and secondary school levels.

Youth and Sports

Kenyans under 30 years of age constitute 75% of the country population. Consequently, delineating sports from the youth is suicidal and may lead to increased crime, drug use and abuse, HIV/AIDS etc.

Consequently political parties need to appreciate that youth and sports are serious phenomenons with social-economics implications of a society and hence came up with serious/well thought out policies. Party of National Unity (PNU) appreciated that there was need:-

1. *To expand opportunities for youth to develop their sporting talents and take part in international events.*
2. *To nurture and harness talent through improvement of existing sports stadia, investing more resources in training programmes.*
3. *Fostering greater linkages between school programmes and national sports activities*

4. *Provide budgetary support in the form of tax exemptions to sport equipment donated or purchased for the promotion of sports for the youth.*
5. *A new legal frame work for sports in Kenya will also be put in place to facilitate the development and management of sports in the country.*
6. *Enhance the recently established support mechanism for rewarding those who excel in international sports.*

Party of National Unity (PNU) committed itself to special attention on

1. *Development of sport talents among our youth to maximize their social and economic potential.*
2. *Finalization of a sports bill to create the necessary regulatory regime for the benefit of our sportsmen and women.*
3. *Rehabilitation and expansion of existing sport facilities to improve quality.*
4. *Investing in the training of trainees as a means to improve quality and standards in the sports sector.*
5. *Development of more classic sports training facilities.*
6. *Expansion of the range of incentives, including employment in sports training institutions.*
7. *Development of national capacity to sponsor international sports.*

Consequently, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) committed itself to:

1. *Involve the youth in developing a comprehensive national policy for the youth.*
2. *Continue harnessing the limitless energies and talents of our youth.*
3. *Provide more sports and recreational facilities for the youth.*
4. *Will promote a healthy lifestyle among the youth by campaigns such “say no to drugs and alcohol”.*

As much as the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) commitment is commendable it did not elaborate on the modalities on how to enhance youth activities in Kenya.

Superiority in Sports

Both Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) observed that sport has become an important source of foreign exchange earnings for our talented youth. As pointed out by Toriola, Adetoro, Toriola and Igbokwe (2000) sustainable youth development requires concerted effort of all relevant parties involved in the sports delivery process in both public and private sector. Limited partnership would hinder proper implementation.

In the scenario of youth and sports the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) committed to;

1. *Reclaim all recreational areas that have been grabbed.*
2. *Ensure that sporting facilities are well maintained and managed.*
3. *Encourage greater participation of children in sports and drama through their schools curriculum.*
4. *Reward and recognize the greater talents of Kenyans in the fields of sports, media, culture, arts, music, theater and film.*
5. *Bring a competitive sport in Kenyan teams participating in various regional and international events.*

Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) further pledged to:

- *Establish a sport policy and legislation unit that will have the responsibility of developing policies and guidelines in areas of women and sports, junior sports, disabilities sports, code of conduct, anti-doping regime and sports infrastructure.*
- *Increase funding for all sports and cultural activities by among other ways setting up a national sports lottery to assist in building world-class sporting facilities.*
- *Establish a Kenya sports commission, Kenya institute of sports and national sport academies for various sporting disciplines.*
- *Encourage private sector participation in the development of sports with a potential focus on sports -, branding, and promotion of athletes, commercial sponsorship, sport export promotion and sport promotion.*
- *Building new stadiums in every region of the devolved government.*

It is notable that Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) pledged to actively promote sports for physically and mentally challenged and improves training facilities. Equally ODM pledged to promote and reward exemplary achievements by individuals with disabilities who have excelled in their chosen career.

However, the manifestos of both PNU and ODM are only different in nomenclature. Political parties in Africa are weakened by lack of internal democracy, the absence of ideology different from that of the ruling party, factional struggles over succession and/or personality of founding fathers (Kiiza, 2005). It was interesting to determine the short falls of both PNU and ODM manifestos and germinate a sport recipe for the Grand coalition government..

Omissions on Sports by PNU and ODM

The omissions of both parties are weighted against the sessional paper number 3 of 2005 on sport development.

1. The sports pledges made by the two parties are too general to allow the Kenyan people tax the Grand coalition Government for non-action as far as sports in Kenya is concerned. Suffice is to say that this is not new because political parties in Africa are notorious for mere rhetoric. According to Schmitter & Karl (1991) modern democracy is a system of governance in which valuers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting through competition and co-operation of the elected representatives.
2. Both parties did not address the aspects of mass and traditional sports as enshrined in the session paper No. 3 of 2005 on sports development.
3. The pledges and commitments made by the two parties were to be implemented and achieved within a five year period. Consequently, the parties needed to dwell on the how, where and when implementation is supposed to take place.
4. Both parties warranted/promised a short cut to success. It takes a painstaking process to arrive at success in sporting endeavours and more aptly when success is measured at international levels. Both parties deliberately omitted in their manifestos, the concept of retirement from sports. They ran away from the reality, in that a significant number of former Olympic athletes in Kenya are wallowing in poverty even after representing and winning medals in the Olympic Games and other international competitions.
5. Both parties did not dwell at length on sports and women, sports and people with disabilities, and sports for the elderly. Nay, these are groups which have been marginalized not only in the sports arena but in all the other spheres of life.
6. Both parties did not seem to appreciate the importance of Sports Science and enhancement of performance in sports. Consequently, the close linkage between research institutions and sports federations/association was overtly omitted.
7. Both parties failed to appreciate the role of recreational and competitive sports in preventive health, sports as an industry, sports tourism and the globalization of sports.
8. The political parties needed to have recognized the special role played by P.E and sport in education institutions. Through a vibrant P.E programmes in educational institutions, the learners will be able to face the challenges of both free primary education and “free” secondary education.
9. Interestingly both parties ran away from addressing sporting activities for people/youth that are outside legalized institutions such as schools. It is appreciable that a significant number of youth operate outside schools.
10. Both parties did not appreciate that sports can be utilized for nation building and nation hood. Indeed, both parties did not appreciate that there was the sessional paper No.3 on sport development which needed to be enacted into a bill of parliament

Conclusion

The Kenyan people may have voted in large numbers in the 27th December 2007 general elections whose outcomes led to deaths of over 1,200 Kenyans and internal displacement of over 350,000 persons. Nay, the socio-econ-political consequences of the disputed elections will always have an everlasting scar on Kenyans. The formation of the Grand coalition government between PNU and ODM does not seem to address the sporting needs of the Kenyans. That is why political parties will always swindle and con the electorates during the campaign period. But based on the clean blood which was shed by the over 1,200 persons, Kenyans have a right to better sporting policies and infrastructure. Consequently, we appeal for the following to be addressed by the grand coalition government.

1. Sports issues to be addressed effectively by the recently created Ministry of Youth and Sports. Since 1964, Kenya has not had a ministry with minimal dockets like the current one of Ministry of Youth and Sports.
2. That the session paper No. 3 of 2005 on sport development to be enacted into Bill of parliament, so that issues bordering on corruption lack of transparency, nepotism, tribalism in our federations can be punishable in law.

3. That the adhoc rewarding of athletes should be a thing of the past. Indeed, a comprehensive policy on this should zero down to better rewards as enshrined in the session paper number 3 of 2005 on sports development.
4. That the ministry of youth and sports should ensure that all the other relevant ministries have relevant policy guidelines on the importance of recreational and competitive sports among people working in those ministries.
5. The ministry of youth and sports need to champion the call for mass sports. It is through successful mass sport participation that competitive teams at world level.
6. The ministry of education science and technology needs to ensure that P.E is properly taught, supervised and evaluated. Else, rote-learning and a lot of emphasis on passing of examinations will continue unabated.
7. The ministry of medical services needs to appreciate that Hypokinetic diseases are on the increase. Consequently it needs to mount public education on the need to lead physically active life-styles.
8. Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in conjunction with the ministry of youth and sports need to champion the cause of reviving and revitalizing traditional sports and games.
9. The role of research in sports has to compliment the technical and tactical preparation of our athletes for competitions. Therefore, it should be mandatory that all federations/associations open linkages with universities which are training sport specialists.
10. The ministry of youth and sports needs to be funded to its fullest in order to take sports to the next level. Urgent attention should be given to the mass exodus of elite athletes to the west and Arabic countries.
11. Poverty has made sports development in Kenya and other part of Africa a nightmare. Consequently, the grand coalition government needs to zero-rate equipment which is meant for sports development
12. Ratification and domestication of Africa youth charter which seeks to mainstream the young men and women into active social economic and leadership affairs of the countries, regions and content, to which sport indispensable.
13. Wide consultations and participation of all stakeholders in sports before important policy documents and party manifestos are published.

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