



Financial Sustainability Models and Resources Mobilization Strategies as Panacea for Sustainable Institutional Sports in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed why financial sustainability in institutional Sports matter and the various financial sustainability models and resources mobilization strategies. Although considerable research has been conducted on how to improve institutional sports in Nigeria, somewhat less attention has been paid to financial sustainability models and resource mobilization strategies as it has been done in other countries that led to their improvement in various aspects of institutional sports. Presently in Nigeria, there is a notable absence of sustainable financial models and resource mobilization strategies within institutional sports. The lack of private sector involvement and ineffective utilisation of existing policies and resources contributed to the stagnation of sports development at the institutional level. While some initiatives like public private partnerships (PPPs) have been proposed, they have yet to be widely adopted. This paper discussed why do financial sustainability in institutional Sports matter and the various financial Sustainability Models and resources mobilization strategies. Some of the sustainability financial models include; allocation of specific funds for University sports: coaches' and trainers remunerations, financial incentives, structured talent identification and development funding among others. Resource mobilization strategies on the hand include; leasing sports complexes, conduct tournaments and hoisting of international events, and adequate Manpower, infrastructure utilization, and public-Private Partnerships among others. The paper recommended institutions should develop a comprehensive institutional sports policies, holistic Framework, athlete-Centric approaches, promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), diversifying Revenue Streams and investing in Infrastructure and Technology among others.

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Introduction

Sports play a crucial role in fostering youth development, promoting health, and strengthening social bonds. People across the globe play sports and identify with sports teams and events, looking to these for a sense of identity, deep purpose and entertainment. Primarily, because of this entertainment value, money has become a big part of many sports in recent years. However, institutional sports in Nigeria are hindered by severe financial constraints. Without sustainable funding and innovative approaches to resource mobilization, this essential sector risks stagnation. A range of games have been professionalized in the last few decades as a result, and become active economic as well as social sectors (Andrews & Harrington, 2016).

To better understand the purpose of sports within the context of University education, it is expedient to appreciate the immeasurable role of University education as an institution promoting sport. Sports development is regarded as the gradual increase, and advancement of sports from the cradle strata to a higher level with due cognizance and of the indices that enhance the realisation and actualization of sport in every society (Yazid, 2014). Apparently, these indices include among other things, infrastructure, personnel, funding, sport policy, viable sports programmes including competitions.

Sport remains a veritable tool that unites the people of every nation; it brings people together no matter their socio-economic status, educational status, religious belief and gender. It has inherent values of enhancing physical, mental, social and psychological well-being of individuals besides the economy value derivable from its participation (Hamafyelto, 2006). Although sport is one of the many activities of any Nigeria universities, it remains obviously the least in the priority list of any Nigeria University Governing Council or indeed the top management of any university. That

makes sport a mere frill or appendage (Hamafyelto, 2018).

Sport development as a public policy priority is increasingly marked by growing institutionalization and government involvement and the development of a state apparatus for the delivery and management of sport (De Bosscher, Bingham et al., 2008; Houlihan & Green, 2008; Bergsgard et al., 2007; Green & Houlihan, 2005). Academics and institutions have often observed that sport is a driver of social values (Chalip, 2006; Hoyer & Nicholson, 2009; Lee et al., 2013 ;), physical health (Cunningham & Beneforti, 2005), mental health (Bisset et al., 2020) and social inclusion (Bailey, 2005).

Alongside its well-known social contribution (Woods & Bulter, 2020), international bodies have observed the potential positive/ negative impacts of sport on the environment (European Council of the European Union, 2022). According to the United Nations (2010), the impact of sport on the environment comes about through a whole set of related activities, from the construction of sports facilities to individual sports routines (UN, 2010). Understanding the sports sector's potential to advance sustainability is fundamental to promoting full-scale engagement of sports actors. Impact investment in sport (IIS) is a core component of UNESCO's flagship initiative, 'Fit for Life'. As the United Nations (UN) led for sport and physical education, UNESCO is developing resources to scale up public and private investments in sport for development (S4D). Fostering more and better investment in sport will be a major focus of the Seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII), to be held from 26 to 29 June 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan. This Conference was springboard to raise awareness and facilitate action to make IIS a global reality. It is increasingly recognized that sport delivers a range of benefits that extend far beyond the conventional sporting



sphere (Palathingal, 2018; Angus and Associates, 2017). With support from UNESCO, the Commonwealth Secretariat (Hatton et al., 2020) has demonstrated that sport contributes to at least eight of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

College sports represent a significant financial investment for many institutions, with revenue streams primarily derived from ticket sales, media rights, sponsorships, and merchandise. Additionally, the best betting apps cover college sports tournaments, offering specific promotions around them, further enhancing revenue generation potential. These diverse revenue sources enable schools to enhance their sports programmes with state-of-the-art facilities, attract top coaching talent, and increase their visibility. High-profile sports like football and basketball can generate millions of dollars. For instance, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) schools boast massive stadiums, often filled, contributing significantly to their revenue. Coaches in these leagues also command high salaries, with averages reaching \$4.1 million annually (College Insider, 2025).

Proponents of college sports highlight several economic benefits. Successful sports programmes can elevate an institution's profile; attract higher enrollment, and increase alumni engagement and donations. Moreover, sports programmes can foster community and school spirit, which are valuable intangible benefits. These elements contribute to a vibrant campus life and can enhance students' overall college experience (College Insider, 2025). However, sport finds itself at a crossroads. Enormous opportunities exist for further development, but these are currently underutilized especially in institutional sports in Nigeria. Examples include the capacity to connect a wide array of government domains, deploying these more effectively to meet sustainable development targets. Sport is also facing challenges related to the evolution of its funding model (Cox and Sparham, 2013; Furrer and Elmer, 2020).

Specifically, funding on the basis of inputs and outputs does not respond directly to opportunities for sport to showcase measurable outcomes that would better inform budget-holders and decision-makers, both within and beyond the sector.

Sports department budgets in institutions have been a focus and source of controversy in higher education for decades, as most programmes consume institutional resources while contributing mostly intangible benefits. Financial pressures across higher education are forcing institutional leaders to take actions that had previously been considered untenable. Digging deeper into the revenue makeup and expense drivers of both autonomous and mid-major sports departments highlights how difficult stabilizing bottom lines and adds insight into actions over the past year by institutions (Kozlov & Walsh, 2025).

The economics of institutions sports has been an area of growing significance-and concern-at many institutions, where the business model and mission are often distinct from other university operation. Under many resource allocation models, sports departments are treated as auxiliary units within the institutions. As such, they are expected to break even financially and rely on a variety of revenue sources, many of which are under threat (Kozlov & Walsh, 2025). Colleges and universities have been spending more and more on sports budgets and expenses as the years have progressed and college sports has become a billion dollar industry. Colleges have turned to a race against each other to gain the most resources to recruit top tier talent and increase revenue and expenses. The schools have essentially been flaunting themselves to show off to other schools and attract better and more recruits (Caro & Elder, 2017).

Sports Department finances involve complex interactions between the private sector, institution donors and funds, often obscuring the financial picture for both the sports department and the institution as a whole. For some institutions, the



sports department is a genuine source of revenue diversification, while others rely on student fees and institutional subsidies to balance department budgets. Expenses are equally convoluted, with the complexities of accurately costing financial aid or overhead expenses making a simple profit and loss calculation difficult. Furthermore, the intangible benefits sports departments contribute with regard to market exposure, student experience, fundraising and alumni engagement are difficult to quantify through a traditional bottom-line analysis (Kozlov & Walsh, 2025).

Presently in Nigeria, there is a notable absence of sustainable financial models within institutional sports. The lack of private sector involvement and ineffective utilization of existing resources contribute to the stagnation of sports development at the institutional level. While some initiatives like public private partnerships (PPPs) have been proposed, they have yet to be widely adopted. Addressing these financial and infrastructural challenges is crucial to advancing institutional sports in Nigeria. The Nigeria University Games Association and other institutional sports should seek more sustainable funding mechanisms, including private investments and partnerships, to ensure the growth of sports programmes across institutions in Nigeria.

Financial sustainability is essential for the long-term success of institutional sports in Nigeria as it ensures ongoing support for athletes, competitions, and infrastructure. Stable funding allows universities and institutions to maintain sports facilities, provide scholarships, and host events that are crucial for athlete development. Leveraging resources through public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, and government schemes can help fill the financial gaps. These initiatives enable universities to sustain sports programmes and enhance participation at both grassroots and elite levels (Khureja, 2021; William & Kirubakar, 2019). By mobilizing additional resources, universities and institutions can build a more

sustainable and efficient sports ecosystem, ensuring that Nigeria athletes have the infrastructure and financial backing necessary to excel. This paper looked at how financial sustainability models and resource Mobilization Strategies can serve as panacea for sustainable institutional sports in Nigeria.

The lack of a sustainable financial model and resources mobilisation strategies has hindered the growth of institutional sports, resulting in limited infrastructure, minimal athlete support, and a lack of competitive opportunities. By addressing issues such as inadequate government funding, underutilized corporate partnerships, and inefficiencies in the management of existing resources. These challenges can be resolved by incorporating sustainable financial model and resources mobilization strategies in promoting sustainable institutional sports in Nigeria. The present status of the ecosystem brings forth the urgent need for policy intervention and a paradigm shift towards creating a self-sustaining sports ecosystem in institutions in Nigeria. Such a transformation is not just about securing financial independence but also about enhancing the overall quality of institutional sports from the brand and product to the ultimate beneficiaries, the athletes themselves.

To plan effectively for both the short and long term institutional sports, institutions management must work with their sports committee to design a planning paradigm that addresses the challenges facing sports development in their institutions, while anticipating the greatest strategic opportunities and competitive challenges facing their institutions. This can require an analysis of the institution's current operating model, including carefully evaluating activities that may not be financially sustainable and/or strategically aligned with the institution's future. To do so requires the management engagement, as well as the development of a framework to support long-term



financial sustainability aligned with strategic priorities.

In a nation where sports often mirror societal progress, the Indian sports industry stands at a crucial juncture. The journey from reliance on charity and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) to a paradigm of financial self-reliance is not just something we fancy, but something that is essential. This evolution carries profound implications for the industry, changing the mere mechanics of funding sports initiatives to fundamentally redefining the trajectory of Indian sports. Financial independence is pivotal in reshaping the horizon of Nigerian sports. It grants sports organizations the autonomy to make decisions that align with their long-term visions and goals, free from the constraints imposed by donor-driven agendas. This autonomy is crucial in nurturing a sports ecosystem that is responsive to the evolving needs of athletes and the aspirations of a nation poised for global sporting excellence.

Why Does Financial Sustainability in institutional Sports Matter?

In a nation where sports often mirror societal progress, institutional sports in Nigeria stand at a crucial juncture. The journey from reliance on charity and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) to a paradigm of financial self-reliance is not just something we fancy, but something that's essential. This evolution carries profound implications for the institution sports, changing the mere mechanics of funding sports initiatives to fundamentally redefining the trajectory of Nigeria institutional sports. Financial independence is pivotal in reshaping the horizon of institutional sports. It grants institutions management, sports department and sports committee the autonomy to make decisions that align with their long-term visions and goals, free from the constraints imposed by donor-driven agendas. This autonomy is crucial in nurturing a sports ecosystem that is responsive to the evolving needs of athletes and the aspirations of

a nation poised for global sporting excellence (Sanand, 2023).

The current model, largely dependent on donations and CSR, is unpredictable and often restrictive. A sustainable financial model broadens the revenue base, tapping into multiple streams such as broadcasting rights, sponsorships, merchandising, and ticket sales. This diversified approach ensures a steady flow of funds and reduces vulnerability to economic downturns and changing donor priorities. Financial sustainability directly impacts the ability to build and maintain world-class sports infrastructure. It enables the creation of advanced training facilities and the employment of qualified coaches and trainers. These elements are essential for nurturing talent and elevating the performance of athletes on international platforms. With adequate resources, student-athletes can access the best training regimes, nutritional plans, and competitive opportunities. This not only enhances their performance but also elevates Nigeria's stature in the international sports arena (Sanand, 2023).

Sustainable funding models enable widespread sports education and participation, creating a pipeline of talent and fostering a culture of sports throughout the institutions because they do not have anyone to dictate the spend which is where priorities change. As the institutional becomes financially robust, it attracts more investment, sponsor interest, and public engagement. This cycle leads to increased revenues, which can be reinvested into the industry, further propelling its growth and development (Sanand, 2023).

Financial Sustainability Models for institutional sports in Nigeria

Financial sustainability means having the resources to seize opportunities and react to threats while maintaining operations and generating value without undue interruption financial sustainability is less about making profit than it is about attracting and maintaining responsible patronage (Andrews & Harrington, 2016). International models of



financial sustainability in institutions sports offer valuable insights that can be applied to the Nigeria context. In the United States, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) provides a robust model where University sports are sustained through a combination of broadcasting rights, corporate sponsorships, alumni donations, and ticket sales. The NCAA manages substantial revenues from media deals, particularly for high-profile sports like basketball and football. This financial model allows universities to reinvest in sports infrastructure, athlete scholarships, and athletic programmes, ensuring a continuous flow of resource (Bcsguestwriter, 2023; Finkelman, 2023). Similarly, in Australia, Universities leverage partnerships with private enterprises and government bodies to ensure sports programmes remain viable. Many Australian Universities collaborate with local governments and private firms to use their sports facilities for public events, which helps generate revenue while maintaining world-class infrastructure. These international examples illustrate that a multi-channel financial strategy involving public, private, and community funding sources can lead to sustainable sports programmes (UniSport Australia, 2023).

Allocation of Specific Funds for University Sports: Adequate funding is crucial for the development of institutional sports, as it enhances athletic programmes, improves facilities, and supports student-athletes' overall experience Bass et al., (2015), research indicates that well-funded sports programs contribute to increased student engagement, higher enrollment rates, and elevated institutional profiles.

Coaches' and trainers remunerations: adequate remuneration is essential for retaining skilled coaches and trainers enhancing the quality of university sports programmes. Research highlights that disparities in salaries among coaches can affect their motivation and performance, directly impacting the development of student-athletes and the reputation of sports programs. Traugutt, Sellars,

and Morse (2020) emphasize that salary differences in collegiate sports are often influenced by the perceived market value of the sport, which can lead to inequities that demotivate underpaid coaches and trainers.

Financial Incentives: Establish cash rewards, sports scholarships for winner's financial incentives, such as scholarships and cash rewards, play a critical role in enhancing athlete motivation, performance, and overall development. Arita (2021), highlights that sports scholarships positively influence student-athlete behavior, improving academic performance, social integration, and commitment to sports. Similarly, Keener and Hussey (2023), demonstrate that financial incentives significantly enhance athletic performance,

Structured Talent Identification and Development Funding: Separate funds for talent identification and development. Effective talent identification and development require systematic investment in scouting, infrastructure, and athlete support. Baker, Cobley, and Schorer (2011), emphasise that talent development in sports hinges on a well-organised framework supported by adequate resources, including trained personnel and access to high-quality facilities. This approach can be scaled nationally, supported by structured funding for talent development. National Collegiate Athletic Association's model of extensive scouting networks and scholarship programmes offers a valuable comparison, demonstrating how targeted financial investments lead to long-term athlete success and a sustainable talent pipeline.

Recruiting at the college level is almost a sport in itself. With the intricate styles and systems that are used, it is something that changes with the time, much like sports itself (Nolan, 2011). The recruiting basics in college athletics are getting as many highly touted recruits as possible to become successful (Dronyk-Trosper & Stitzel, 2015). As



easy as that sounds, there are one hundred other schools doing the same thing. The NCAA is a tricky organisation with rules and regulations in place to protect the recruits. There are live and dead periods where coaches are allowed to contact potential athletes and talk about the future. The organization limits the time coaches or employees of a college have with prospective students so they are able to even the recruiting landscape (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2018). The goal of the coaches and institutions are to get a national letter of intent [NLI] signed by an athlete, which ends the recruiting process for the athlete, locks them into the school and allows them to receive scholarships and financial aid (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2018).

There are numerous steps the student-athlete has to follow before they sign the letter of intent. First, the student athlete will be contacted by college coaches once they appear on the coaches recruiting radar. This usually will take place during the student's sophomore or junior year of high school. The athletes will then start receiving offers from the schools. Athletes are limited to five official visits to the schools. After this process has concluded then the student athlete will verbally commit to that school. This usually means a recruit will be attending the school they verbally committed to, but there have been cases where they change their mind based on other circumstances. After that, they are official commits which means they are done looking at other schools and are planning on signing their NLI (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2018).

Fund the West African Universities Games, African Universities Games and International Universities Sport Federation Games and International Exposure: International exposure is pivotal for the development and motivation of emerging athletes. Engaging in global competitions enhances athletes' skills, broadens cultural understanding, and fosters resilience. Thomas et al. (2023), emphasise that early career international

experiences are crucial for athletes' professional growth and personal development.

Resource Mobilisation Strategies

Globally, successful resource mobilisation strategies focus on creating public-private partnerships (PPP) and fostering collaborations with private companies. Countries like the UK have developed successful PPP models where universities lease sports infrastructure to private companies for events, creating a revenue stream that helps maintain and upgrade facilities. In addition, collaborations with media companies to broadcast university-level competitions have helped universities gain exposure and funding. In the Indian context, tapping into the rising interest in sports like kabaddi and football through digital platforms and corporate sponsorships can open new revenue channels for university sports programmes (Grant, 2013). Resource mobilisation through infrastructure leasing and corporate sponsorship can offer long-term sustainability if implemented efficiently. Leveraging Nigeria's growing sports market and establishing a structured framework for resource mobilization will be critical for the future success of institutional sports in Nigeria.

Resource Mobilisation strategies

Adopting the following strategies will promote sustainable institutional sports in Nigeria

Leasing Sports Complexes: Internationally, universities have effectively utilized their sports facilities by leasing them to external organizations, thereby generating revenue and ensuring optimal utilization. For instance, Cardiff University in the UK offers its sports facilities to the community, providing access to fitness centers, exercise classes, and sports clubs. This approach not only generates income but also fosters community engagement and promotes physical activity among the public. Similarly, in the United States, collegiate sports venues are increasingly being transformed into multi-faceted platforms for



revenue generation. By hosting various events beyond university sports, such as concerts and conferences, these institutions maximize the use of their facilities and create additional income streams.

Conduct tournaments and hoisting of international events: Institutions should conduct regular tournaments and host International event would boost sports infrastructure and provide global exposure for local athletes.

Adequate Manpower: Addressing this manpower gap is crucial for the development of institutional sports programmes. Implementing targeted recruitment drives, offering competitive salaries, and providing professional development opportunities can attract and retain qualified sports staff.

Infrastructure Utilization: A recurring theme was the underutilization of existing sports facilities. Institutions primarily rely on government funding for maintenance, which participants deemed inadequate. Few institutions leverage their infrastructure for revenue generation by hosting public events or leasing facilities to private entities.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Many sports directors highlighted the absence of structured public private partnerships as a significant barrier to resource mobilisation. While some universities manage to secure small-scale sponsorships from local businesses, these arrangements often lack formal agreements or sustainability.

Institutions Funding Mechanisms: The reliance on student school fees is a critical challenge for state Universities. While these fees cover basic expenses like infrastructure maintenance and equipment procurement, they do not allow for expansion or modernisation

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between institutions and Sports Federations:

There is the need for memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) institutions and sports federations in enhancing resource utilisation and fostering collaborative development Partnerships between institutions and national sports federations can amplify resources and expertise. Expanding such MOUs would integrate institutions into national sports ecosystems, ensuring better access to advanced training and competition opportunities.

Incorporate Alumni into the institutions sports committee: Alumni contributions play a crucial role in sustaining college sports programmes. Victories in sports can drive increased donations to sports departments (College Insider, 2025).

Effective time management and support system for student-athlete: Effective time management and support systems are essential for student-athletes to balance their dual responsibilities. Communication with coaches and lecturers is crucial to addressing scheduling conflicts and ensuring academic commitments are respected. For instance, successful student-athletes often prioritize their tasks based on deadlines and importance, allocate specific times for study and practice, and seek support when needed. Colleges and universities should emphasise developing transferable skills, educational opportunities, and career preparation for student-athlete. By providing resources for personal growth, leadership development, and career guidance, institutions can support student-athletes holistic well-being, preparing them for success beyond their sports careers (College Insider, 2025).

Action plans and policy recommendations for financial sustainability models and resources mobilization strategies for institutional sports in Nigeria.



- i. Develop a comprehensive institutional sports policies
- ii. Policies addressing athlete development, sports infrastructure, funding, and governance.
- iii. Ensure equal opportunities for all sports, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- iv. Focusing on athlete welfare, career development, and post-career support.
- v. Aligning policies with global best practices and standards in sports management.
- vi. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)
- vii. Diversifying Revenue Streams
- viii. Investing in Infrastructure and Technology
- ix. Strengthening student-Athlete Development Pathways
- x. Create a Culture of Sports Excellence
- xi. Ensuring Good Governance and Transparency
- xii. Building a Research and Development Ecosystem

Conclusion

It could be concluded that the present financial system and resources model used in institutional sports in Nigeria is not effective and not yielding expected efficacy as it is done in other countries. Therefore, a robust financial sustainability models and resources mobilization strategies for institutional sports in Nigeria is need for sustainable institutional sports in Nigeria

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