

# Evaluation of Football Curricular In Zambian Football Clubs of the MTN/FAZ Super League

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**Abstract:** This study is an evaluation of football curricular in clubs of the Zambian Mobile Telephone Network (MTN)/Football Association of Zambia (FAZ) Super League. The study inquired into the existence of a common football curricular in clubs of the MTN/FAZ super league. This study adopted the realist approach guided by a case study design, which aimed at understanding the relationship between the initial context, mechanism of change and intended outcomes of the Football Curricular (FC). The sample was composed of 111 respondents drawn from 12 selected football club, the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Child development, the Football Association of Zambia (FAZ), football administrators, and officials from National Sports Council of Zambia (NSCZ). Data was collected from sport coach educational documents; questionnaire, video recording, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured. Data was analyzed qualitatively using the themes. The study revealed that football clubs in the MTN / FAZ super league had independent football curricular and identified some mechanistic blocks that prevented coaches from developing their knowledge, skill and understanding of the FC. The study recommended that a National Football Curricular (NFC) be designed by FAZ; CPD programmes for coaches should be developed and organizations such as Olympic Youth Development Centre (OYDC) and National Organization for Women in Sport Physical Activity and Recreation (NOWSPAR) should be assigned to spearhead CPD programmes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Football has become scientific in the modern days and for a nation or club to successfully develop in this aspect, there is need to have football curriculum. Nations globally have made transformational changes in football in order to improve the standards. The transformational changes in football provide a solid foundation for youth sports development (Snow, 2012). According to the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa Zone VI survey of 2007, youth sports development and coach education were identified as the two strategic spearheads in Zambia to steer football development. However, it appears there was no clear direction in this area and very little scholarly documentation had been done. As a result, there was no coherent, well-defined body of knowledge and shared terminology in player development.

Notable among football clubs that have etched indelible names on the map in Zambia but whose exploits sadly continue to elude the scholarly gaze include Nkana Red Devils, Mfulira Wanderers, Green Buffaloes, Kabwe Warriors, ZANACO, Nchanga Rangers, Red Arrows,

ZAMSURE, ZESCO United, Power Dynamos and City of Lusaka. This omission begs for rectification.

Marsh and Willis (2003) wrote that a curriculum should be a reflection of people's own views of the world, their values, attitudes and priorities about the knowledge. Countries like German, Australia, Belgium, United States of America and United Kingdom developed football curriculum, which triggered education of large numbers of youths and the adult players (Cross, 2012).

Marsh and Willis (2003) described an approach in the field of curriculum development as that which should indicate a set of beliefs, which may either be explicit or implicit, consistent and comprehensive enough to represent a reasonable guide or coherent thinking. This, in a way provides a well-defined body of knowledge and shared technology in player development. It was indeed, the responsibility of the Ministry of Sports and Child Development to develop such an approach based on the treasured Zambian Traditional values, priorities and views of football Education.

The survey carried out by the then Supreme Council for Sports in Africa (SCSA) Zone VI in 2007, to map and examine the Sports Education and Accreditation System in Southern Africa (SCSA Zone VI, 2007), indicated that most of the countries such as Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe did not have a well-developed football Curricular. This could have been the case with football clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league.

## II. OBJECTIVES

This study was informed by the following objectives:

- i. To determine the existence of a common football curricular in clubs of the Zambian MTN / FAZ super league.
- ii. To propose improvements to football curricular of the Zambian MTN / FAZ super league based on item

## III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopted qualitative research approach and specifically the case study. A case study helped the researcher to collect data through interviews, focus group discussions, observations, video recording and document analysis.

The sample was composed of twelve (12) club managers, twelve (12) coaches, three (3) officials from Ministry of

Sports, three (3) officials from FAZ, three (3) officials from NSCZ, six (6) sports administrators and seventy-two (72) football players were purposively sampled.

The main and primary source of data collection for this study was sport coach educational documentaries, newspapers, observations, focus groups discussions, semi-structured interviews and video recording. The documentaries were searched for from FAZ, NSCZ and Football Clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league, while semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were held with the football club coaches and other individuals who were identified to have valuable insights in football curriculum in Zambia. Books and magazines were used as secondary data sources in this study. Also used as a method of gathering data was the planning documents created by the coaches and club managers as a direct outcome of their training sessions. Data was analyzed qualitatively using the thematic approach.

#### IV. RESULT

Club managers revealed that football clubs in the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league did not have common football curricular. One of the club managers explained that:

*We don't have a common football curriculum in our Zambian MTN/FAZ super league, but nearly all clubs have a curriculum which coaches use when preparing objectives and drills for their coaching. This is the document that contains the content...*

Six of the twelve club managers did not see the necessity of having common football curricular in the clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. One of the six club managers explained that:

*The common football curriculum is not a requirement for club registration and therefore, not necessary for coaches, since most of them have done coaching courses where a curricular was followed.*

Another club manager confirmed that:

*The football curricular has nothing to do with coaching football. All that a coach needs is to have a personal philosophy in coaching. It is from the personal philosophy that he/she will plan his/her activities.*

Semi structured interview schedule conducted to the twelve coaches indicated that coaches were educated on how to design drills and selecting activities for their clients during their coaching courses and for that reason, they were required to collect as much literature on drills as possible, from different sources. The following was the explanation from one of the twelve coaches:

*Each coach is unique and has a different philosophy in coaching, style of play and also follows a desired coaching model. From this point of view, I feel a football curriculum is not a necessity for clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league.*

When a question concerning the existence of the football curriculum was asked to participants in the twelve FGDs, all participants expressed ignorance. One of the participants in one of the clubs express ignorance that:

Kashikwalibana curriculum ku bbola, awe tatwaimona napo

(So there is even a football curriculum, we have never seen it before.)

All the six sports administrators' response from a semi structured interview concerning the necessity of clubs having a common football curricular indicated that it was necessary for football development in Zambia. To exemplify this, one of six sports administrators explained that:

*In the current situation where clubs have different football curricular, there are poor linkages from one level to the other. Teaching and learning of football is disjointed, largely defined by behaviourist approach.*

The Minister of sports, Youth and Child development had a divergent view concerning the common football curriculum. He indicated that a common football curricular was necessary for giving coaches and coach educators a clear picture of what knowledge and skills were required at each stage of development. To demonstrate this argument, his explanation was as follows:

*The nation must have a vision on how to play football, which should be documented in a national document, in this case the national football curricular. Then a philosophy on how to coach football should be articulated, so that every coach in our nation should know the kind of football our nation wants and the kind of players needed in order to play the way we want. This eventually will lead us to the kind of coaches we need in order to produce the kind of players we need. When we reach that stage, we shall stop hiring and firing coaches on the basis of their performance elsewhere.*

Sports administrators revealed in an interview that a common football curricular was very important in providing coaches with the prior knowledge on what level each player in their custody would have been at the time he joined the club and at the same time know the progression rate in terms of football knowledge. One of the six sports administrators indicated that lack of a common football curricular was detrimental to the developmental path of players from the time they joined the clubs. This was his explanation:

*.....the ability to design a common football curriculum is very beneficial for coaches. However, the lack of a common curriculum and direction by a large number of grassroots clubs has hindered the progress of our players. A common curriculum gives direction for both the coach for the youth team (soccer academy) and the senior team in terms of coverage. Because they are both using a common football curriculum, there is a likelihood that the coach for the senior team will have prior knowledge on what the graduate player will have covered from his previous junior team and this*

*provides continuity. Apart from continuity, common football curricular provides a clear developmental path for players from the time they are introduced to the game through to their mature stage. However, lack of a clear development path from the time a player joins a club at the youngest age group to when he leaves is detrimental. Otherwise, how do you judge his success? How do you efficiently evaluate how far a player has come and where he needs to go?*

Officials from FAZ and officials from NSCZ provided data on the existence of the common football curricular in clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. They revealed that, they were aware that each football club had football curricular, which was different from each other.

## V. DISCUSSION

As observed by Armstrong (2003), the curricular refers to decision-making processes and products that focus on preparation and assessment of plans designed to influence students' development of insights related to specific knowledge and skills. This aspect was in line with Cross (2013) who stated that, there was a shift from traditional coaching to the use of football curricular in modern football. This was true of all the football clubs in the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. All the clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league were using football curricular except it was not common. The football curricular were said to have been designed by individual club management and were not related in any way to each other. This was attributed to the fact that the football curricular was not a requirement for club registration. In addition, owners of the clubs dictated what components they needed to have in their football curricular. This was in the area of profit generation because football was considered as big business for the proprietors of clubs. However, for football to generate some meaningful profit there was need for coaches and club managers to have a pool of football knowledge and this kind of knowledge could be derived from the football curricular. The football curricular explained the mental and physical characteristics of football players during the various developmental stages and how these stages were linked together. The coaches' awareness of such information was very beneficial in planning, designing and execution of session drills. Marsh and Willis (2003) stated that a curriculum is a vision that communicates what a school does, what knowledge, experiences and values are offered; a structure that spells out ways in which education intention should be implemented.

On the other hand coaches of the football clubs in the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league saw that there was absolutely no need for them to use the football curricular in preparing drills and activities. They believed that their acquired knowledge from the coaching courses they underwent was enough to make them design such drills and activities. This assertion explained their narrow understanding of the role of the football curricular. If the football curricular was said to be the vision that communicated what the school

does, then every coach and club manager should have knowledge of the football curricular. Otherwise, how would they implement it? The argument by the coaches concerning the content of their courses was well placed because their course content covered the preparatory aspect; a very important issue in teaching football. However, the football content coverage for coaching courses did not address the specific kind of drills in a game like situation and besides; the football content was specifically meant for the trainee coaches and not football players, therefore not suitable for coaching football players of clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. Participants in a FGD discussed the existence of the football curricular, all participants in the twelve groups were ignorant about the existence of the football curricular, and this was strange because in this implied that, the football curricular knowledge was confined to the coach only and footballers were considered as empty vessels, which could be filled with drills and activities. This particular methodology helped to mould players into a certain behavioural mode and did not allow them to construct their own knowledge. FAZ officials and NSCZ revealed that a common football curricular was necessary for football clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. A common football curricular would level the playing field for all the football clubs and encourage competition amongst them. Additionally, it will not only create a common basis for monitoring of the implementation of the football curricular across all the clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league, but also an opportunity for officials from FAZ and NSCZ to monitor standards as independent stakeholders. It would also create some linkages from the amateur level of football into the intermediate through to the elite level. This therefore means players in one level would be confined to certain football content suitable for them. For example the beginners (amateurs) learning the basics of football while players in the elite level learning techniques of football. This situation would make team selection and session planning easier also for the coach because players would be moving at the same level in terms of coverage and developmental pathways. Cross (2013) argued that footballers should learn basic skills in the early stages and graduate into advanced skills as they move up the ladder because learning follows a certain pattern. Club managers on the other hand had a contrary view. Their view was that each particular football club should have its own football curricular because each one of them pursued different goals. This view may have given rise to the possibility that the guidelines (football curricular) though well intended were not sensitive to all the nuances of the problem as it was perceived by the target group and in particular the coaches who were the implementers of the football curricular at club level. Schenk and Williamson (2005) for instance showed that the desirability and necessity of involving young people (in this case, players & coaches) in preparatory dialogue not only in order to respect their right to participant in developing football innovations and standards that would

benefit them, but also in order to enhance the likelihood of successful implementation of the football curricular.

Although club managers were the providers of resources and the fact that football was big business to them, they needed to allow technocrats to champion the designing of the football curricular. Findings in this study showed that other stakeholders were only involved at implementation stage. It is however doubtful and based on the findings from this study whether the retrospective involvement of such stakeholders registered the same effects in all the football clubs of the Zambian MTN/ FAZ super league compared to if the involvement were done earlier, either prior or in the course of the drafting exercise. The hangover effects of the top down and technocratic processes were surely strong. However, it was noted that the involvement of the coaches, players and other stakeholder like FAZ and NSCZ were instrumental in raising awareness of their role. Perhaps more importantly, that they were able to demand for club manager's engagement and advocate for their entitlements accordingly. Ironically, if people don't know about the programme they will not appreciate it even when they are designated beneficiaries.

The core issue therefore, was that there should be a uniform national reference document which coaches and club managers should follow as they go about implementing their work so that they know what specific body of knowledge their players would have covered as they move up the ladder and also allow coaches to develop their creativity and innovative skills in order to improve the quality of game display.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study concentrated on discussing the theme, the availability of a common football curricular in football clubs

of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league. It examined the experiences and activities involved in the training sessions within clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league (i.e. making judgements about the process by which players acquired training). The process considered the evaluation of instruction, the coaches' coaching and the players' training. This was in line with Patton (1990) who asserted that an evaluation should focus on how something happens. The study established that the football curricular in football clubs of the Zambian MTN / FAZ super league existed. However, the football curricular was not common in all the clubs. The study further established that the football curricular in all the twelve clubs of the Zambian MTN/FAZ super league did not provide consistent content, which coaches could constantly refer to.

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