

Education and Sports and Games: Interdependencies and Realities in SAARC Nations

Abstract

The relationship between sports and games and education has been understood in diverse ways. The influence which sports and games have on educational development has made us to provide for quotas in admission, relaxation in attendance and examination, special attention and care, etc. The author explores from this perspective the influence of sports and games on total development of a person - holistic approach in education. The author attempts to relate the situation of SAARC nations in this area. The article attempts to view sports and games as a part of education and learning, it identifies the possible areas of influence which they might have developed and that they add to a new paradigm in modern education.

Keywords: Education, Development, Sports, Games, SAARC.

Introduction

Management is increasingly being applied in specialized field like sports and games. It is also attracting more and more diverse management personnel. The referee, sports and games if properly managed can assist in educational development. This attempt to identify some innovative measures to bring about a positive change in the area of sports and games and in turn help develop holistic education.

The technical definition of sports for the purpose of the paper is dependent on the views of United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace, who consider that in the area of Sport & Development, 'sport' is generally understood to include physical activities that go beyond competitive sports. "Incorporated into the definition of 'sport' are all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include: play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games."¹

The various levels at which sports and games can be played help streamline the discussion as follows:

Sports and Games at the Global level, Sports and Games at the Regional level and Sports and Games at the National level.

Global Level

The opinion of UN on Sports can be summarized in brief as below:

- The United Nations has been using sport as a tool in development, co-operation and humanitarian aid efforts for decades.

¹ www.un.org

- In recent years, UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies have increasingly recognized and harnessed the power of sport to achieve their objectives, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

According to Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General: Sport is increasingly recognized as an important tool in helping the United Nations achieve its objectives, in particular the DGs. By including sport in development and peace programmes in a more systematic way, the UN can make full use of this cost-efficient tool to help us create a better world.²

Wilfred Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary General on sport for Development and Peace says that

Sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the UN to improve the lives of people around the world. Sport builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace.³

There have been many collaborations, reports and resolutions, along the above lines and some are listed below:

- 1922: UN ILO and IOC signed an agreement to collaborate
- 2001: Appointment of Special Adviser on Sports for Development and Peace
- 2003: UN Inter-Agency Task Force Report: ...the world of sport represents a natural partnership for the UN system
- Annually since 2003: Adoption of resolution on sport as means to promote education, health, development and peace.
- 2005: International Year of Sport and Physical Education

The International Working Group on Sports for Development and Peace identify the following benefits from sports: Individual development, Health promotion and disease prevention, Promotion of gender equality, Social integration and the development of social capital, Peace building and conflict prevention/resolution, Post-disaster/trauma relief and normalization of life, Economic development and Communication and social mobilization.

Regional (SAARC) Level

Physical activity is vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical, social and emotional health. The benefit of sport reach beyond the impact of physical well-being and the value of educational benefits of sport should not be underestimated. The National Sports in SAARC Nations and an analysis into its nature (defacto - whether the sport or game is considered to be an intrinsic part of the culture

² www.un.org/sport

³ *Ibid.*

of a nation its popularity; or de jure - whether the sport or game has been adopted), popularity (popular sport in the nation), status (status or world ranking of the nation in the national sport category) and turnout (usual public turnout in matches of the national sport in the nation) is presented in table 1 as below.

Table 1: National Sports in SAARC Nations				
Country	National Sport	Nature of the Sport	Country Ranking	Turnout watching the Sport
Afghanistan	Buzkashi	Dejure		High
Bangladesh	Kabaddi	Defacto		Low
Bhutan	Archery	Dejure		Moderate
India	Hockey	Dejure	Top 10	Low
Maldives	Diving	Dejure		
Nepal	Kabaddi	Defacto		low
Pakistan	Hockey	Dejure	Top 10	Moderate

Source: Compiled by author⁴

The above table 1 reveals the following startling facts:

- 7 Nations
- 7 Different sports
- 5 Dejure sports given international status
- 4 Nations have gained international reputation

Table 2: Popular Sports in SAARC nations		
Country	Popular Sport	Country Ranking
Afghanistan	Football	139 th
Bangladesh	Cricket	7 th
Bhutan	Football	187 th
India	Cricket	1 st
Maldives	Football	183 rd
Nepal	Football	163 rd
Pakistan	Cricket	Top 4

The above table 2 reveals on the other hand the following facts which are very discouraging:

- 7 Nations
- 2 Popular sports

⁴ Internet Sources: Websites of UN; Wikipedia.

- 2 sports given international status
- 3 Nations have top 10 ranking
- 1 sport where countries collectively have top ranking

As a result, the above discussion indicates a need for change in management strategy of sports and games. The following considerations are worth mentioning:

Firstly, more emphasis should be given on defacto games, which are traditional;

Secondly, get acceptability and international recognition of such sports;

Thirdly, inclusion in major events like Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, Olympic Games, etc., is a 'must' for the survival of the sport; and

Fourthly, bring about changes within athletes and the aspirants for this games.

National Level

The Indian situation in the area of sports and games can be highlighted as follows:

Firstly, The existence of National Sports as well as State Sports. The national sport is Hockey but in the State of West Bengal, the popular sport is Football;

Secondly, The ranking of hockey as well as football in India is very poor;

Thirdly, The popularity of Cricket in India is unquestionable. It is considered as a 'religion';⁵

Fourthly, The 'icons of hockey' are very few as compared to the icons of other sports like cricket, tennis, etc., and

Fifthly, the popularity of hockey in educational institutions is also comparatively quite low.

The stress on 'innovativeness' in Sports Management is crucial since it is not yet too late to test and introduce new strategies in the area. The focus should be a change in strategy.

The interdependencies between education and sports and games can be sensed through the urgent need for the following in the education area which can help sports and games to develop further.

- (i) Creating awareness about sports management;
- (ii) Development of specific courses on sports management;

⁵ <http://www.un.org/sport> (accessed on July 30, 2012).

- (iii) Training and development of educators in the field of sports management;
- (iv) Establishment of centres of learning in the area of sports management;
- (v) Allocating government funds for the development of sport projects;
- (vi) Linking sports management courses to jobs;

Finally, as for mindset changing certain schemes/areas/activities from sports and games which the prevailing educational institutions can identify and consider for implementation are ⁶: Morning assembly be replaced by morning jog/walk; simple arithmetic being taught through marbles, abacus, etc.; probability through card games, ludo, etc.; and strategic management through chess, monopoly, hurdle race, etc.

The innovativeness of the approach demands a sustained and continuous effort and should be reviewed periodically. The review is supposed to reveal facts for its continuity and change, if necessary. Sports and games is an area of management which urgently requires attention because if suggestions are implemented in the education sector it has the potential to bring forth gain to both the sectors - education and management. The SAARC nations report a very poor world ranking in their national sports. It is by itself an indicator which helplessly seeks government as well as corporate attention.

The education sector, looking for dynamism can help bring about better ranking by introducing different types of sports and games at different levels of education.

⁶ <http://www.touch.fifa.com/associations> (accessed on July 30, 2012).