

Sports Education in India: A New Era in Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

In India sports is recognised as one of the best physical activity from both educational and social point of view. Government of India has recognised sports as a part of education curriculum. Earlier only a few students, who were fond of games like hockey, football, cricket or tennis, were allowed special facilities. Schools and colleges do not have adequate facility to meet the demand of the sports. Infrastructure, trainer, coach and equipments. It is also not possible for the educational institutions to offer those facilities with limited means. Parents now consider sports are an important tool for development of children. A new breed mostly from sports background has come up to offer solution in this segment in the area of sports education. Sports education and management is finally taking off in the country. Schools can offer traditional sports with limited resources. Their models insist schools focus in academics, they take care of sports. This article will discuss various business models in sports education.

Keywords: Sports Education, Game Changer, Skill & Fitness, Surplus Energy, Entrepreneurship.

Sports: An Overview

In India sports is recognised as one of the best activity from both the educational and social point of view. We can find a playground even in a small remote village in India. Sports facility is one of the criteria for affiliation of any academic program. Government of India has recognised sports as an essential part of the education curriculum. Educationists and various educational authorities have come to the conclusion that it is in the interest of society as a whole that adequate facilities should be provided, depending upon the availability of funds, for games and sports for the country's youth. Various factors need to be taken into account in this connection. Physical fitness is of the utmost importance for everyone, young and old. Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure has become prime issue all over the world. Participation in games and sports invariably ensures good health, fitness and generally freedom from ailments of various types. Beside, unless the human body is kept in smooth, trim and in an overall fit condition, even the brain will refuse to co-operate after some time. Actually, physical fitness is one of the necessary conditions for proficiency in studies and for winning distinctions in examinations. Ailing bodies do not make for sharp brains. Exercise in some form or another is necessary. Sports provide an easy method to ensure such fitness. Regular participation in sports provides a healthy channel for diversion of energies. Wherever students and other youth participate in sports regularly, misdirection of youthful vigour is much less and the tendency to indulge in indiscipline and mischief is curbed.

The statement that "the battle of Waterloo was won on the playfields of Eton", implies that playing games help to inculcate lasting values, which make for good soldiers, good fighters with good discipline, through promoting hundred percent physical fitness. Playing the game on the playground naturally instructs people to play the game of life in the right spirit, which is what matters most, not victory or defeat.

Young people always have surplus energy, and if this is fruitfully utilised, the foundations are laid for a healthy society. They also learn to develop the vital quality of learning how to work together, to become not only good winners, but also good losers.

The funds are being allocated more and more for encouraging sports in schools, colleges and universities. In fact, sports have become an essential part of the curricula. Unlike when only a few students who were fond of games like hockey, football, cricket or tennis were allowed special facilities now, regular programmes are drawn up in all educational institutions to persuade as many students as possible, regardless of special aptitudes, to participate in games and not merely watch matches occasionally to cheer up their favourite teams or attend the prize distribution functions at the end of a sports season.

Schools and colleges in India broadly come under aided or non aided by the Government. A new group of private education entrepreneur has come up with not-to-profit motive in school education. In order to address the lack of infrastructure in terms of coach, trainer, equipment and play ground which are common problems for those institutions to take sports as part of education. Even a student with specific quality in sports is not often focussed in this set up. A new group of schools of international standard has come up mostly in tier I and tier II cities. Study shows parents believe sports and games play a major role in development of their children, but at the same time they want it to be handled professionally. Schools find it difficult to recruit proper trainer of different category, based on the choice of the students. Three general categories, where maximum students may enroll are football, cricket and badminton. A school not only requires three trainers, but sufficient number of students is also required to continue with the program. The cost of running the program has to be funded by the schools, where all students may not take in the program, or some of them may prefer the places nearer to their home.

Sports have become a serious business in the country with IPL and half marathons. Sports education and management is finally taking off in the country. Schools can offer some kind of traditional sports with limited resources. As the economy grows and expands, there will be greater awareness of fitness and personal health and that will require trained personnel to fill the gap of sports professionalism in all aspects.

Sports Education and Sports Management

Sports and related areas like sports education and sports management are edging their way into the spotlight. Sports education is beginning to develop in India, but not many see it as a viable option at the moment. It has given rise to outsourcing of sports education and sports management.

The requirement is a comprehensive solution with a mix of carefully crafted technology aids backed by proper teachers or coaches. Schools do not have adequate training facilities to produce champions and there are not enough qualified trainers.

A group of new entrepreneurs¹ has developed new strengths to fill gap. Their objective is to make all school kids to play and not just to produce a few sports wizards. Their model emphasise that schools focus professionalism on academics, while they take care of sports. These companies are designing sports coaching course that use mix of on-field and video training. While some companies are offering complete turnkey solutions to schools, others are focusing on specific functions of sports education and management. There are 8 - 10 big companies who have started in this area including big industry houses. In addition to traditional program like football, cricket, they also offer specific program like archery, drills techniques, relaxation technique etc

It is a clear shift from forced exercise or games in schools to a fun way of learning sports. Moreover it is mix of modern technology and the latest development in sports training. The emphasis is not only specific programs for all students, but overall development through skills like running, hopping, throwing a ball or catching all of which are linked with games. Even kids can practice a combination of stretching exercise and relaxation techniques. These programs are more about voluntary, after schools program that offers a mix of scientific training for traditional sports and also training of chess and table-tennis. This kind of sports solution helps to improve eye-hand-coordination and core training exercises to improve body muscles for students.

In short we have this addressed the following points:

School does not have adequate sports facilities, There are not enough trained personnel, Sports is not always part of the curriculum, Everybody may not be ready to pay for sports, Sports become a good profession, Sports can trainer / coach has become a professional job, Sports have become part of the Gym culture in India.

Business Model in Sports Education

In India there are eight to ten companies offering sports education and management services mainly in K-12 schools. They offer fee based regular program to turnkey solutions for schools. In addition they also run their own centers, with all facilities. The revenue come from fee based program and consultancy for sports education.

¹ S Biswas, "A new game plan", in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, July 15, 2012.

Following models are practiced in India presently.

- Pre Schools training program
- After School training Program
- Sports skills and fitness program
- Infrastructure consulting for school sports
- Corporate Sports
- Sports for corporate organization
- Corporate fitness program
- School children fitness program
- Sports fitness active recreation program
- Sports as career program
- Training at international standard
- Physical exercise for body program
- Blood pressure, Diabetic, obesity healing related exercise
- School program for Olympic sports

In last two years,² around six to eight players have started operations. One of them collaborated with an international sports marketing and management company to develop market and manage sports and entertainment in India. It has already bagged commercial rights to football for 15-years from the All India Football Federation and for basketball from the Basketball Federation of India. It has also tied up with the All India Tennis Association and Professional Golf Tour of India to develop tennis and golfing talent in the country by setting up academies.

According to experts, with corporate sponsorship in sports marketing growing at 12 percent annually, sports education and management could be a \$38 billion business in a few years. Hence companies are trying to sell the concept of sports education to schools and other educational institutions. One Bangalore based organization,³ which had a three fold increase in revenue to 12 Cr. and 130,000 students, is targeting million students and 100 Cr. revenue soon. It provides complete solutions and charges Rs 125-250 per kid per month for its programmes with 180 partner schools.

Another Mumbai based organization,⁴ which has a similar business model but focuses more on competition level sports training has partnered with 9 schools. It

² S Tarafdar, "Sports Education is developing first in India" in *Financial Express*, Mumbai, June 8, 2008.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ K Pathak, "Sports Education nets big bucks" in *Business Standard*, Mumbai, December 6, 2011.

identifies potential talents and then trains them rigorously with coaches from various sports. Its charges are between Rs 150 and Rs 200 per child per month.

Another organization is setting up its own academies to train students in the area of cricket. It believes schools should focus on academics while it takes care of sports. It wants to be an educational hub working with schools unlike an external service provider. Currently focusing just on cricket they might go in for badminton and tennis in future. The organization charges between Rs 1,000-1,500 per child at its Academy. It has nine centers in Mumbai, a few in Pune and three in Jaipur currently with plans to open in four or five other cities in next few months.

Conclusion

The study shows entrepreneurs have come from various back ground. Some of them come from celebrity sportsmen, Sports specialist, scientist, but also people from BPO and bankers have joined in the race. All of these organizations have ambitious plans for the road ahead. One group is looking to add non mainstream Olympic and Asian game and other group is planning to add karate, tai chi and kick boxing. Some companies are going even further. They are also trying to develop the special types infrastructure in schools. They will help school to build artificial football turfs and provide latest sporting equipments. Most of them are expanding their horizon from tire II to tire III cities. Collaboration with foreign partner is yet to start in full swing. One of the big industry houses has already tied up with an international company to offer the same service in Indian market. Schools in metro cities have already tied up with those companies for out sourcing school sports, and is indicative, probably of the way ahead.