

## Higher education and university sports in India: opportunities, issues, challenges and measures

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Received : 10.10.2011; Accepted : 18.01.2012

### ■ ABSTRACT

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty and it is fact that sports participation develops optimistic qualities among participants. Sports are an important component of student's campus life. It is during college time that the youth gets chance to exploit their talent and enjoy it. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1992 states, "Sports and physical education are an integral part of the learning process and will be included in the evaluation of performance. A nation-wide infrastructure for physical education, sports and games will be built into the educational edifice". Youth is the future of any country and university/college sports play a very significant role to build up a very strong backbone of any national sport system and every country has its own agency to coordinate the inter university sports at national and international level. In India, the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) holds the responsibility of organizing and coordinating the sports events. Considering the importance of sports and games, most of the universities have taken a number of initiatives despite resource constraint to improve the standard of sports in the country. In order to bring about a radical change in the country's sports, along with the government, policy maker in higher education, national sports federations, business and industrialist, we the people of physical education and sports profession have to think about the issues, challenges and their role in higher education as well as in the society.

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■ **Key Words** : Issues for sports, Challenges to sports, Higher education, University sports

■ **How to cite this paper** : Kumar, Yogesh (2012). Higher education and university sports in India: opportunities, issues, challenges and measures. *Internat. J. Phy. Edu.*, 5 (1) : 76-78.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty and it is fact that sports participation develops optimistic qualities among participants.

Sports are an important component of student's campus life. It is during college time that the youth gets chance to exploit their talent and enjoy it. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1992 states, "Sports and physical education are an integral part of the learning process and will be included in the evaluation of performance. A nation-wide infrastructure for physical education, sports and games will be built into the educational edifice". Variety of sports is organized for the students and sports are played for a Variety of reasons.

Sports are played for inculcating and disseminating cultural values, inspiring team spirit, building physical health and personality and as a source of entertainment. Most importantly, sports are a big source of physical and mental strength. Through sports we can inculcate a number of virtues in any individual. Moreover, they can have a memorable experience which can cherish throughout his life or her life time.

Youth is the future of any country and university/college sports play a very significant role to build up a very strong backbone of any national sport system and every country has its own agency to coordinate the inter university sports at national and international level. In India, the Association of

Indian Universities (AIU) holds the responsibility of organizing and coordinating the sports events.

The Sports Division of AIU funded by the ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, functions as the Inter University Sports Board of India. It organizes National University Games. At present, University games are organized in 18 events for men, 17 for women and 16 for both men and women at 70 University centres. The division also recommends award of financial assistance for the successful conduct of National University Games. Its also adjudicates the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy awarded to a university for achieving overall excellence in competitive sports. It organizes the Vizzy Trophy Cricket (M) Tournament in collaboration with the Board of Control for Cricket in India and the Champion Colleges Hockey (M) Tournament in association with the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society. The AIU is a member of the International University Sports Federation (FISU) which organizes World University Games, sponsors visits of National contingent of Indian Universities abroad and also acts as a host to visiting teams from other countries. Recently, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports recognized inter-university Sports Board of India, (AIU) as National Sports Promotion Organisation (NSPO) on account of its meritorious contribution in the field of university sports and placed it in the "Priority Category" for the purpose of promoting highly competitive Olympic sports in the country.

Considering the importance of sports and games, most of the universities have taken a number of initiatives despite resource constraint to improve the standard of sports in the country. In order to bring about a radical change in the country's sports, along with the government, policy maker in higher education, national sports federations, business and industrialist, we the people of physical education and sports profession have to think about the issues, challenges and their role in higher education as well as in the society.

Sports is seen as a motivator; participation in sports activities produce physical fitness, build stamina, create mental toughness, build administrators, and put students through university. The objectives and opportunities of sports in universities are not only to develop physical strength among participants; it adds excitement to the lives of both students and faculty members in the universities. Providing adequate facilities and equipments represent a tremendous opportunity for the students. Inter-university sports build spirit and loyalty through its promotion of sports activities and facilities. Objectives and opportunities of sports in universities are :

-To promote students' participation in various sports activities, to establish universities as centres of excellence in sports, to formulate and implement policies and programmes aimed at facilitating the all round development of the personality of students through sports activities, to formulate and implement policies for broad basing sports activities in

the universities and colleges, to popularize indigenous sports, designed to achieve excellence in competitive sports and to create sports infrastructure, including synthetic playing surfaces.

#### **Issues for sports at higher education :**

A set of policies reveals the objectives of the sports facilities in the university or college. University and college are the playing fields where, for better or worse, vital personal issues are resolved-resolutions that not only have a major impact on the students' life in the present but also can have a significant impact on the resolutions of the issues coming up like personal happiness, connections to the society, work culture, career opportunities, etc.

Emerging issues relating to sports development in colleges and universities are:

- Are adequate provisions made for individual development through sports activities?
- Are adequate facilities and equipments available in universities and colleges for the students?
- Are their qualified teaching and coaching staff in universities and colleges to organize competitions and coaching camp of different sports?
- Are sports persons given adequate guidance in evaluating their achievements?
- Does each sport person have opportunities to compete?
- Do sport persons participate fully in the process of learning?
- Are sport activities clearly related to the accomplishment for exploration and experimentation?
- Are sport persons able to apply previous learning and to develop new ones?
- Whether the students are taking advantage of the sports programme throughout the year or are only participating sporadically?

#### **Challenges to sports in universities and colleges :**

Many of the problems in the administration of inter-collegiate and inter-university sports competition stem from the need for financial support. Problem of facilities and equipment clearly indicate that the standards of sports in universities and colleges are not very good. I agree that it is difficult for students to realize their personal needs for strength, speed, agility or endurance. But by providing adequate sports facilities and rewards we can motivate them to participate in sports and games.

Sports related scientific research and development in Indian universities and colleges has not been able to keep pace with international standards in the field of physiology, psychology and biomechanics, etc. major challenges to sports in universities and colleges are:



- Lack of effective planning may inhibit sports initiatives in universities;
- Lack of infrastructure and facilities in the campus;
- Sports activities challenge the attention of both trained architects and educational experts;
- A set of contradictory policies may lead to inconsistency in solutions which might occur if problems were not solved with regard to past performances;
- Sportsmen (boy students) are usually anxious to become star athletes but not anxious to exert themselves in the process;
- Sportswomen (girl students) are not easily motivated in direction of sports activity, for their interest centre more on feminine fancies than on physical feats; and
- Much of the sports plan is lost if conditions under which the sports plan is to be implemented have significantly changed.

#### Measures to develop sports in universities and colleges :

Educating students for the sports fitness and goodness is the most important but difficult task. How students achieve physical fitness varies with each individual, for fitness itself varies in relation to the individual's personal requirements. Students must be made aware of their need for fitness and led toward achievements of this goal. This should be done through both the instructional and non-instructional phase of the total physical education programme. The working of Sports Board in universities has to be more democratic, professional, transparent and accountable.

Universities and colleges should provide opportunities for developing the personality of the students so that they may achieve their full potential and involving them in various nation-building activities on the one side, and broad basing of sports and achieving excellence at national and international levels on the other. In administering the financial affairs of the university/college sports programmes, sound business methods are a must. The universities/colleges should formulate a model code of conduct as well as set of guidelines.

The inter-collegiate and inter-university sports events/competitions should be made more attractive in order to encourage students to participate in various competitions at the university levels. Measures to develop and promote sports in universities could be:

- Sports and physical education should be integrated in the education curriculum of the higher education/universities;
- The mass media should be mobilized for fostering a sport culture in the universities/colleges;
- A policy needs to be evolved for promoting the participation of maximum number of students in sports activities and competition in the universities;

- An annual sports calendar of national championship should be prepared and circulated timely throughout all affiliated universities/colleges.
- All universities/colleges should earmark open spaces for playgrounds whenever new sports facilities are being developed;
- A tie-up with state – level or national level training centres may worked out to ensure better utilization of sports facilities in the universities;
- Participation in international inter-universities events in various competitions should be encouraged;
- Central and state governments should provide funds for broad basis of sports in the universities/colleges;
- Universities/colleges should organize competitions for all the sports disciplines, particularly those which are popular at the state and local level;
- Laws, rules and regulations framed by respective university/college should not merely provide for sports/play fields and games in new areas at the planning stage but should actively protect and maintain the existing sports infrastructure from political interference;
- The universities should review the statues of the physical education and take appropriate measures to improve the curriculum, the quality of teaching staff and the infrastructure.

There is a need for creation of a sports climate in the universities/colleges and generating a consciousness in every student of the need to be physically fit and to participate in sports activities. Appropriate sports facilities should be provided to the universities/colleges students so that they can enjoy their favourite sports activities. Universities in India require setting up of sports infrastructure in a planned manner and more efficient use of available infrastructure and coaching facilities with promotional activities.

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