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The evolving role of sports in Indian education

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Abstract

Physical education (PE) and sports have been a cornerstone of our educational system for years. Yet, despite their undeniable relevance to a well-rounded life, they often face neglect from various stakeholders within society – administrators, educators, and even students themselves. PE programs typically encompass both theoretical and practical aspects, aiming to develop not just physical skills but also a deeper understanding of health and fitness. Unfortunately, the societal perception of PE remains largely dismissive, with some viewing it as a mere waste of time. This couldn't be further from the truth. During games and physical activities, we learn valuable lessons in teamwork, strategy, and resilience – all while utilizing time efficiently and productively.

Swami Vivekananda's timeless quote, "Sound mind in a sound body," perfectly encapsulates the symbiotic relationship between physical and mental well-being. It's challenging to achieve optimal cognitive performance without a healthy and active body. Spreading awareness about the holistic benefits of PE and sports is crucial to maximizing their impact. Therefore, it's imperative to address the hurdles that impede the progress of sports programs in our schools. By illuminating the positive influence of sports, we can ignite a brighter future for physical activity within our educational landscape.

The tide is beginning to turn, however. Parents, increasingly aware of the detrimental effects of modern lifestyles on their children's health, are becoming proactive in seeking solutions. Many now actively encourage their children to pursue sports or physical activities alongside their academic pursuits. This shift in parental perspective bodes well for the future of PE and sports, potentially leading to a more integrated and holistic approach to education.

Keywords: Education, Physical Education, Sports, Physical Activity, Well-being, Holistic Development

Introduction

Sports have been an integral part of the world culture dating back as far as ancient civilizations. The most eminent example of sports culture and society, the Olympic Games are more than 3,000 years old. Sports have always had an extraordinary impact on society, culture, economy, and every other facet of a nation. For those engaged in sports, sports are the epitome of diligence, hard work, and dedication. The popularity of sports culture can be determined by the fan base football and cricket enjoy worldwide. Sports help people maintain the best of their physical, mental and psychological health. Owing to the widespread popularity of the internet and television, people consume sports on a massive scale. The celebrity status of top sportspersons validates the importance associated with sporting events.

Sports and Academic Life

Schools and colleges are the setups where young minds spend a significant amount of their time. During these formative years, the focus should be on the overall development of a child. Sports, education, and health share an elemental link, and together they contribute significantly to the holistic development of a child. Every school and college has sports as part of their curriculum, as they understand the significance of physical health and activities. We live in times where sports are not seen just as a hobby but a way to achieve a healthy body and mind, making them an essential part of education. Now education is not anymore solely limited to academics; sports have become an integral part of it.

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The Changing Dynamics of Sports Culture in India

A good sports culture is an index to measure a nation's growth and progress. The medals and trophies earned by players at globally recognized sporting events bring glory and honor to the country. India has an ancient and rich culture of traditional sports. During the pre-independence period, sports culture in India could not bloom due to the challenges related to economic and social reforms, but later the country borrowed modern sports like cricket, badminton, tennis, volleyball, etc. from the outside. Over time sports earned the interest of people. The popularity and respect of individuals associated with sports kept on rising. People went on to even claim cricket as a religion in India. India was no longer taking baby steps at this point and managed to win significant world tournaments of sports. The 1983 Cricket World Cup won by India's national cricket team became a historic event for the country. India, as a country, produced sportspersons who went on to become masters and world champions of sports they were associated with.

Opportunities in Sports

There is a broad spectrum of professional opportunities that sports as an industry offers. In addition to a sportsperson, one can become a trainer, sports coach, athletic director, marketing and promotion coordinator, PR, physical therapist, sports and fitness nutritionist, sports journalist, sports announcer, sports agent, umpire, referee, sports photographer, a sports lawyer, etc. There are professional courses and dedicated educational institutions to serve the individuals aspiring to make a career in the sports industry.

The Role of the Indian Government

The Indian Government recognized the importance of sports and formed the National Sports Policy in 1984, aiming to make sports and physical education an essential part of the academic curriculum. The revised National Sports Policy, 2011, advocates the importance of sports and physical education in developing better individuals, enhancing productivity, and bringing social harmony. Through the initiative 'Khelo India Youth Games' under the 'Khelo India' program, the government aims to support the development of sports culture at the grassroots level. Also, there are National Sports Awards dedicated to acknowledging the contribution and efforts of sportspersons. The popular awards are Arjuna Award, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Dronacharya Award, Dhyan Chand Award, and Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar.

Traditionally, Indian schools haven't fully embraced sports as an integral part of the educational tapestry. Many of us have experienced the bitter pang of a beloved physical education (PE) class being sacrificed on the altar of "syllabus completion" – often by a well-meaning but misplaced science teacher. Support from home wasn't always guaranteed either. In a society where high marks are the holy grail of intellectual prowess, parents can hardly be faulted for prioritizing academics.

Ironically, many state and national boards do include sports as a subject in Class X. However, its significance often ends there. The inclusion feels more like a formality than a genuine commitment to holistic development. At the root of this issue lies respect. Sports are often relegated to the realm of leisure activities, viewed as unworthy of serious attention. Students excelling in sports are frequently seen as the

"distracted" ones, neglecting their "real" studies. This creates a lopsided system that prioritizes mental development at the expense of physical growth.

However, a glimmer of hope emerges. A shift in the parental mindset is taking root. Parents are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of physical well-being and are actively encouraging their children to participate in sports alongside academics. This change in perspective bodes well for the future of PE in Indian education. By recognizing the value of sports in fostering not just physical fitness but also teamwork, discipline, and resilience, we can pave the way for a more balanced and enriching educational experience for all students.

In popular culture, sports has always been considered an outdoor activity to stay fit and healthy. While it is true that regular participation in games keeps us physically fit, the importance of sports in our lives goes beyond fitness and health. There should be a fundamental guiding principle: no school without sports. All students should get a chance to play a game of their choice. Our education system should follow the philosophy of using sports to equip children with life skills such as discipline, teamwork, leadership, accountability, patience, and self-confidence.

Sports serves as a dynamic platform for nurturing a range of life skills and can help children become more confident, punctual, disciplined, and respectful, both on and off the field. It fosters teamwork, encouraging individuals to work together toward a common goal. This skill is invaluable in various aspects of life, both in academics and the workplace. Through sports, students also have the opportunity to take on leadership roles, nurturing qualities like responsibility, decision-making, and accountability. Moreover, sports teach students how to persevere in the face of setbacks and defeats, arming them with the mental fortitude to overcome challenges.

Aim and Objectives

Our society is dedicated to fostering a multifaceted approach to education, encompassing traditional academics alongside the vital fields of sports education and physical education (PE).

Firstly, we strive to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop, improve, and maintain optimal health and fitness. This comprehensive training equips people to take charge of their well-being and lead active, fulfilling lives.

Secondly, we actively seek to cultivate strong partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders. This includes collaboration with relevant industries, NGOs working in the sports domain, government bodies, national federations, state athletic associations, and esteemed educational institutions. By fostering a collaborative spirit, we aim to create a unified force for promoting the benefits of sport and PE across all segments of society.

Finally, we are committed to establishing and coordinating impactful activities in tandem with international agencies that champion the cause of sports development. Through such collaboration, we can leverage a global platform to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and collectively elevate the standards of sports education and physical activity on a worldwide scale.

Importance of Sports Education

In the realm of education, a silent war often rages between the pursuit of academic excellence and the cultivation of a

well-rounded student. While the importance of core subjects like math, science, and language is undeniable, a vital component of holistic development frequently gets relegated to the sidelines – sports education.

Sports education extends far beyond the mastery of physical skills on the playing field. It's a vibrant tapestry woven from threads of physical fitness, teamwork, discipline, and mental resilience. At its core, it's about fostering a healthy lifestyle, nurturing a sense of self-confidence, and equipping students with essential life skills that transcend the athletic arena.

Firstly, the benefits of sports education for physical well-being are undeniable. Participation in sports strengthens the body, promotes cardiovascular health, and builds endurance. It fosters a sense of kinesthetic awareness, improves motor skills, and teaches students the importance of proper nutrition and rest, laying the groundwork for a healthy and active life.

However, the impact of sports education extends far beyond the physical realm. Team sports, in particular, cultivate a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Students learn to work together towards a common goal, strategize effectively, and celebrate success as a united front. They grapple with the challenges of overcoming setbacks, learning valuable lessons in perseverance and sportsmanship. The competitive environment fosters a sense of discipline and dedication, as students push themselves to achieve their full potential. Sports can also be a powerful tool for building self-esteem and confidence. Mastering new skills, overcoming challenges, and experiencing the thrill of victory all contribute to a strong sense of self-worth and a belief in one's capabilities.

The lessons learned on the playing field translate beautifully into the classroom and beyond. Discipline translates into improved focus and concentration during academic pursuits. Teamwork skills become invaluable tools for navigating group projects and collaborative ventures. Resilience learned in the face of athletic setbacks empowers students to cope with academic challenges and persevere through difficulties. Sports can also be a powerful tool for social inclusion, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of belonging amongst students from diverse backgrounds.

In a world increasingly dominated by technology and sedentary lifestyles, sports education offers a much-needed counterpoint. It encourages students to step away from screens, embrace physical activity, and connect with their bodies. It fosters a sense of community and belonging, providing a healthy outlet for stress and anxiety. For some students, sports can serve as a powerful motivator, offering a sense of purpose and achievement that can positively impact their overall academic performance.

The importance of sports education isn't limited to students. An informed and engaged citizenry is vital for the growth and development of any sporting landscape. Sports education can play a crucial role in nurturing a culture of sportsmanship, appreciation for athletic excellence, and understanding of the rules and regulations that govern various sports.

Sports education is not merely a recreational pursuit or a luxury add-on to a curriculum. It's a cornerstone of holistic development, nurturing not just physical well-being but also essential life skills that empower students to thrive in all aspects of life. By integrating sports education effectively into the curriculum, we can cultivate a generation of well-rounded individuals equipped to not only excel in academics

but also lead healthy, active, and fulfilling lives. Let us move beyond the scoreboard and recognize the enduring importance of sports education in shaping the future of our youth.

Positive Effects of Education in Sports

In the competitive world of athletics, the pursuit of peak performance is a constant quest. While raw talent and physical prowess are undeniably important, the often-overlooked factor of education can be the difference between a good athlete and a great one. A well-rounded understanding of various aspects of sports, combined with proper training techniques, elevates athletes to a whole new level. Here's how education empowers athletes to reach their full potential.

- **Understanding the Science of Sports:** Athletic education delves into the fascinating world of sports science, equipping athletes with a deeper understanding of their bodies and how they function. This knowledge encompasses topics like anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology. Athletes learn about the intricate workings of muscles, bones, and the cardiovascular system. They understand how different training methods impact their bodies and how to optimize workouts for maximum benefit. This knowledge empowers them to train smarter, not just harder, reducing the risk of injuries and maximizing efficiency.
- **Mastering Skills and Techniques:** Sports education goes beyond theoretical knowledge. Athletes receive in-depth training in the technical aspects of their chosen sport. This includes proper form, execution of techniques, and strategic gameplay. Qualified coaches with in-depth knowledge of the sport guide athletes in refining their skills, ensuring they are performing movements with proper form and maximizing their effectiveness. Understanding the "why" behind specific drills and techniques fosters a deeper level of engagement and improves overall performance.
- **Nutrition for Peak Performance:** Diet plays a critical role in athletic success. Sports education equips athletes with the knowledge to create personalized nutrition plans based on their specific needs and training intensity. They learn about the importance of macronutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, and how these fuel their bodies for optimal performance. Additionally, they gain insights into micronutrients like vitamins and minerals, crucial for overall health and recovery. This empowers athletes to make informed dietary choices that fuel their bodies for peak performance and ensure efficient recovery.
- **Developing Mental Toughness:** The mental aspect of sports is often underestimated. Athletes face immense pressure to perform, and the ability to manage stress and stay focused is paramount. Sports education can incorporate techniques like mental visualization, goal setting, and stress management. Athletes learn to develop a positive mindset, build mental resilience, and overcome performance anxiety. This empowers them to stay focused under pressure, maintain composure during competition, and maximize their performance when it matters most.
- **Understanding Injury Prevention and Recovery:** Athletic endeavors can be physically demanding, and injuries are a constant threat. Sports education teaches

athletes about proper warm-up and cool-down routines, stretching techniques, and injury prevention strategies. Additionally, they learn about the importance of proper recovery, including sleep hygiene, active recovery techniques, and proper nutrition for muscle repair. This knowledge empowers athletes to take an active role in preventing injuries, optimizing recovery times, and ensuring long-term athletic success.

- **Building Sportsmanship and Teamwork:** While individual excellence is celebrated in some sports, teamwork is often the key to success, particularly in team sports. Education in sportsmanship fosters respect for teammates, opponents, and officials. Athletes learn the importance of communication, collaboration, and working towards a common goal. This creates a positive team environment conducive to peak performance and fosters lifelong sportsmanship values.

Education is not merely an ornament but a vital tool in an athlete's arsenal. Investing in sports-specific knowledge empowers athletes to understand their bodies, train effectively, fuel themselves properly, and develop the mental toughness required for peak performance. By embracing the transformative power of education, athletes can unlock their full potential and write their own winning stories.

Slowly, educationalists, and government departments have realized the importance of sports' and are planning for inclusions in the curriculum which is an essential part of the present-day school education. If the government and educationalist initiatives are properly laid down, one can see a different face of the students in the future.

More Findings from the Study

The study reveals that students who are provided with more than 3 PE sessions in a week are more active and has better body mass indexes (BMI). Where students in the urban and semi-urban areas did not find ideal space to play in their neighborhood, schools can play a pivot role in providing time and space for such students, observed the study. As per the finding, schools that have established sports session, PE, and safety infrastructure have more students with better BMIs.

Conclusion

PE and fitness have rather significant impact on children's performances in schools and education. According to the survey, students need more time to play and engage more with outdoor activities as most of the students in today's time have low BMIs. One child in every three was found unable to sprint as they could have at their age and lack physical strength. "When the education sector can have a proper system in place for teaching mathematics to students, why the same system can't be implemented for PE?"

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