



Policies, Obstacles, and Opportunities for the Future of India's Grassroots Sports

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Abstract

More and more people are realizing that grassroots sports development may help India's athletic ecology, youth health, and talent development all thrive. This research looks at the potential for long-term growth in India's sports industry, the difficulties experienced by grassroots organizations, and the part played by policies. Identification of young talent, improvement of facilities, and encouragement of involvement across schools and communities have all been greatly aided by government initiatives like Khelo India and the Sports Authority of India. Effective grassroots development is nevertheless hampered by a number of obstacles, despite these attempts. For many would-be athletes, the odds are stacked against them due to regional disparities, a lack of qualified coaches, insufficient financing, and poor infrastructure. Gender inequality and academic pressure are two social variables that contribute to the decline in athletic engagement, especially among rural residents. Existing initiatives are typically underutilized because of inconsistencies in policy execution and a lack of institutional coordination.

Keywords Grassroots Sports; Sports Development in India; Youth Sports; Talent Identification

Introduction

The building blocks of a robust and long-lasting sports environment are grassroots sports development initiatives. To find potential early on and develop it into elite performance in a country like India, with its large and varied population, grassroots activities are crucial. In addition to helping kids succeed on the field, grassroots sports have many other positive effects on their health, social lives, and personal growth. There has been a shift in recent years toward official acknowledgement of the value of community sports. Funding, contests, and the identification of talented athletes are some of the ways that government-led programs like Khelo India have attempted to bring back a love of sports in schools and communities. Infrastructure, training programs, and coaching facilities have all been greatly enhanced by the Sports Authority of India. There are still many obstacles to overcome in India's grassroots sports growth, despite all of these initiatives. Particularly in less developed and rural areas, people have less access to quality infrastructure, which limits their ability to participate. Inadequate financing and a lack of qualified coaches further undermine the system. In addition to gender-based barriers, academic pressure, and a general lack of understanding all play a role in the low participation rates that girls experience. On top of that, there is not always enough coordination or uniformity in the way various tiers of government carry out sports policy. Administrative inefficiencies and resource inequality can reduce the impact of plans that exist



on paper. A major worry is the disconnect between official policy and its implementation on the ground. development of grassroots sports in India through an examination of current policies, the identification of critical obstacles, and the exploration of potential future outcomes. Through an analysis of these factors, the research hopes to bring attention to the need for an all-encompassing strategy that can fortify the basis of sports in India and pave the way for future achievements on a global scale.

The Development of India's Sports Policies

Changing national goals, international ambitions, and the increasing awareness of sports as a vehicle for youth development and nation-building have all contributed to the progressive evolution of sports policy in India. The emphasis has changed over the years from meager governmental funding to frameworks that are more organized, inclusive, and performance-based.

A Look Back at the Evolution of Sports Initiatives

Priorities in policymaking in India's early years after independence tended to revolve around education and economic growth rather than sports. But institutions like the Sports Authority of India, which came into being in 1984, were a giant leap forward in the development of organized sports in the country. Supporting top athletes, constructing necessary infrastructure, and providing training facilities were the main goals.

It was not until the '80s and '90s that India started to get it: organized talent development is important. To help develop future sports stars, the government instituted national training programs, coaching systems, and sports hostels. Nevertheless, the scope and level of grassroots integration of these programs were frequently inadequate.

The focus of policy and investment shifted to boosting international performance in the early 2000s, marking a transition toward a more organized approach. Despite attempts to upgrade training processes and update infrastructure, grassroots development continued to be a problem.

Important Changes and Policy Frameworks

The National Sports Policy (2001) was a watershed moment in the development of India's sports policy; it sought to increase global sports excellence while also broadening the country's base of sports fans. It brought attention to the need of identifying talent, developing necessary infrastructure, and encouraging more engagement.

In recent times, grassroots sports have received fresh attention thanks to programs like Khelo India. Initiated with the goal of reviving sports culture in schools and communities, the initiative seeks to discover promising young athletes, offer them financial aid, and establish a solid foundation for their future success.

As part of the changes, the business sector has been more actively involved, governance has been enhanced, and sports science and technology have been promoted. More and more, policies are putting an emphasis on inclusivity, with the goal of boosting participation from women, rural residents, and other marginalized groups.

India's sports policies have developed over the years, shifting from ad hoc initiatives to more organized plans. To boost grassroots development and achieve long-term success in sports, it

is vital to continue reforming and effectively implementing these changes, even though great progress has been accomplished.

Difficulties in Building Community Sports

In spite of increased focus from policymakers, structural and social barriers still prevent grassroots sports development in India from reaching its full potential in terms of participation and talent advancement. It is difficult to establish a robust and inclusive sports ecosystem due to these obstacles, which function on numerous levels and frequently reinforce one another.

Lack of Funding and Resources

A lack of sufficient funds remains one of the biggest obstacles. There is a severe shortage of playgrounds, equipment, and training facilities in many communities and schools. Program quality and continuity are impacted by budget constraints even in programs that do exist. Investment has improved thanks to initiatives like Khelo India, but coverage is still unequal, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas.

Athlete development is also affected by financial limitations. Coaching, transportation, food, and competition fees can put a significant dent in many families' budgets. So, because they do not feel supported, talented people frequently quit before they reach their full potential.

Lack of Experienced Trainers

The availability of qualified and trained instructors is another significant obstacle. Coaching at the youth level is typically more casual and lacks familiarity with current practices in sports science, athlete development, and training. This has an impact on avoiding injuries and performing well in the long run, in addition to skill development.

There remains a large disparity between the need for and supply of coaches, despite the fact that organizations such as the Sports Authority of India offer training programs. The lack of or severely limited access to professional coaching has a disproportionate impact on rural communities.

Gender Inequality and Social Barriers

There is still a gender gap in athletic involvement due to ingrained social and cultural conventions. Many communities do not prioritize women's sports, which results in lower participation rates and less possibilities. Safety worries, an absence of female coaches, and inadequate facilities all work against participation.

There is less time and less incentive for young people to participate in physical activities due to academic pressure and societal expectations that place a premium on education over athletics. Parents and communities still do not fully understand the long-term advantages of sports.

The development of grassroots sports in India is greatly impeded by obstacles like inadequate finance, a dearth of qualified coaches, and social impediments. All ambitious athletes should have equal opportunity to pursue their athletic dreams, and this can only be achieved via concerted effort, more funding, and inclusive legislation.

Sports Marketing and the Function of the Educational System

When it comes to influencing young people to get involved in sports and developing a culture of athleticism, the educational system is king. For many youngsters in India, their initial exposure to systematic physical education takes place in the context of their school. Schools

have the potential to be the main conduit for discovering talent, developing abilities, and encouraging participation in sports throughout life if they are backed by appropriate policies.

Integration of Sports in School Curriculum

Incorporating athletics within the regular school day makes guarantee that students do not see them as extracurricular activities. Frameworks promoted by organizations such as Khelo India place an emphasis on age-appropriate training modules, regular physical education (PE) sessions, and inter-school contests. What is usually included in a well-designed curriculum?

- **Daily/weekly PE sessions** focusing on fitness, coordination, and basic skills
- **Multi-sport exposure** at early ages to avoid early specialization
- **Assessment systems** that value physical literacy alongside academics
- **School leagues and tournaments** to provide competitive experience

For effective integration, schools need adequate infrastructure (playgrounds, equipment), trained PE teachers, and administrative support. Partnerships with organizations like the Sports Authority of India can help upgrade facilities and provide coaching support.

Balancing Academics and Sports

A major challenge is aligning academic priorities with sports participation. In many schools, exam-focused schedules limit time for physical activity. Creating a balanced approach requires both structural and cultural changes:

- **Flexible timetables** that allocate protected time for sports
- **Credit or recognition systems** for sports achievements in school evaluation
- **Academic support for student-athletes**, especially during competitions
- **Awareness among parents and educators** about the cognitive and health benefits of sports

Schools that successfully balance both domains often see improved student outcomes, including better concentration, discipline, and overall well-being.

the education system is central to promoting sports at the grassroots level. By integrating sports into the curriculum and creating a balanced environment that values both academics and physical activity, schools can cultivate a generation that is healthier, more disciplined, and better prepared for both competitive sports and life beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

Sustained and coordinated efforts at different levels are necessary to realise the immense potential of grassroots sports development in India for the nation's sporting future. Although programs like Khelo India and funding from the Sports Authority of India have made great strides, there are still a lot of holes in terms of accessibility, inclusion, and implementation, according to the report. Particularly in rural regions and among marginalized groups, participation is restricted by challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, limited funding, a lack of competent coaches, and ongoing social hurdles. Schools are the main entry points for sports activity, thus the role of the education system is equally crucial. Unfortunately, many young athletes never reach their maximum potential because they put too much emphasis on athletics and too little on their academics. We must adopt a more inclusive and integrated approach if we are to progress. This involves bolstering cooperation between federal and state authorities, investing more in grassroots infrastructure, and improving coach training and



deployment. Development activities can be further enhanced through the use of technology for talent discovery, community involvement, public-private partnerships, and other similar initiatives. In addition to developing top-tier athletes, the goal of grassroots sports development is to promote a healthy lifestyle, self-control, and camaraderie among participants. India has the potential to have a strong sports ecosystem that can sustainably produce national and worldwide champions if its policies are consistently put into action and its vision is long-term.

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