

Creating Leaders in India Through Sports & Physical Education

Dr. Manoj Kumar Meena,

Assistant Professor,
Department of Education
SLBSRSV, NEW DELHI-16

Abstract

Physical activity and sport programs offer great opportunities for youth to develop important life skills, including leadership. Physical education as a course is one way to develop leadership and pedagogy skills in students. Leadership courses are also a great way for aspiring physical education teachers in training to gain and share their pedagogy expertise. The purpose of this article is to share more information about leadership skills and provide an example of how it can enhance such a physical education teacher education program.

Introduction

Successful teams have strong leaders and the importance of this role is evident in all categories of sports. The performance of a leader is very clear in interactive games and during matches. Although less obvious in co-active situations, the leader's contribution to the effectiveness of a team's performance is also influential. Leadership maybe considered as a behavioural process that influences individuals and groups towards set goals. As such, a leader has the dual function of ensuring player satisfaction while steering the individual or group to success.

The qualities of an effective leader:

- 1 Vision
- 2 Ambition
- 3 Motivation
- 4 Charisma
- 5 Experience
- 6 Understanding needs of others
- 7 Empathy

Leadership -

Leadership is the quality of a person to lead others in a family, society, tribe, group, or country.

Styles of Leadership

There are three traditional types of leadership used in sports varying from an amateur level up to the elite level. Many coaches across team or individual sports will have characteristics from one of these styles if not all.

- 1) Autocratic Leaders
- 2) Democratic Leaders
- 3) Laissez-Faire Leaders

Firstly, the autocratic style of leadership tends to make all the decisions and is motivated to complete the task as quickly and effectively as possible. This leadership style is 'authoritarian' and does not take into account the opinions or preferences of the group. The autocratic leader will not delegate responsibility and focuses on group performance and achieving groups. This style would be most effective when quick decisions are needed for large groups/teams i.e. whole team warm up session, when groups are hostile and discipline is needed, in the cognitive stages of learning (Beginners).

Secondly, the Democratic style of leadership tends to share the decisions with the group and is often ready to delegate responsibility. This type of leadership believes in consultation and is interested in developing meaningful interpersonal relationships within the team. The belief is that by giving 'ownership' of the task to each individual, the group will work harder, developing unity and a common purpose. This style would be effective in a co-active game or when time constraints are not as exacting, personal support may be required, if groups are small and when in the autonomous stages of learning has been achieved (elite level).

Thirdly, the laissez-faire style, the leader will stand aside and allow the group to make its own independent decisions. This style can happen automatically and will result in a loss of group direction if the leader is inadequate. Lewin (1985) found that when subjected to this style of leadership, group members were inclined to be aggressive towards each other and gave up easily when mistakes occur.

Which leadership style needs to be adopted?

The characteristics adopted by the leader depends fundamentally upon the 'favourableness' of the situation. As is seen in the table below, the most successful teams will have a strong leader, the task is clear and understood by the players and there is a positive relationship between leader and players.

Going back to the leadership styles, an autocratic leader will be most effective in both the most favourable and least favourable situations, whereas a democratic leader will be most effective in moderately favourable situations.

From reading this article, you should understand how an important role leadership plays in sports, the different types of leadership and how each is suitable to different demands and situations. Above all, that question everyone thinks about, how to be an effective leader. Successful coaches use all the three styles of leadership within their role, switching from one to the other depending on the situational need.

Developing effective leadership qualities through sports and Physical Education

Younger leaders can effectively develop leadership qualities through sports. Spending time learning, practicing and then executing your skills in a team game against a committed opposition helps build effective leadership qualities in oneself. Playing and more importantly leading a team in sport helps develop significant intelligence and a variable response system. The following are some properties of sports that distinguish it from other disciplines and make this a supplemental university:

1. Learning a skill and then practicing it to perfection –

In most sports, you have to learn some skill that develops your strength, hand-eye coordination, flexibility, stamina, focus and much more. As you practice the skill to

perfection, you learn discipline, patience, perseverance and other personality skills that stay with you and become your distinguishing traits.

2. Understanding your role in team –

The better teams have players who know their exact roles and play it to perfection. They also have captains who communicate the game plan and roles clearly to players. Clarity of roles in a team, whether it is sport or work, is highly important.

3. Understanding team objectives –

It's all about the team. There are many instances of players who have played well, but got castigated since they were self-centered and their game (on those instances) did not achieve team objectives.

4. Competition –

The biggest part of sport is competition. Facing competition is one of the biggest thrills and experiences of playing sport. It forces you to step out of your comfort zone.

5. Responding to varied oppositions –

When one works on a shop-floor or in the office, the repeated operation are against a static, consistent and similar opposing force. In sport, you have to encounter inconsistent and dissimilar forces. For example if you practiced bowling a curve ball that curves away from a right-handed batter, during a game you may get a left-hander facing you. If you are a batter, you will constantly be facing balls that are much differently bowled than the ones you are used to. This calls for spontaneous change in your response to what you've practiced. A high degree of flexibility and agility gets built into you as a result of sport. Entrepreneurship, higher levels in managing a business and R&D are probably other areas where incoming forces tend to be varied and inconsistent.

6. Strategy –

Every sport has strategy associated with it. In cricket, the ball, the playing surface and even the atmospheric conditions are variables that have to be planned for and battled strategically. Other sports have their own variables, both inherent and artificially introduced. Captaincy in cricket is not only about building your own team and laying plans to thwart the competition, but also managing these variables.

7. Coaching –

The best way to understand something is to attempt teaching it to someone else. Coaching in sport is a very satisfying experience and you almost develop a mentoring mindset. This is very similar to developing new members in your team or your successors – something that effective leaders do naturally.

8. Team dynamics –

Trusting your team-mates, understanding other personalities and following the captain's directions are part of the game.

9. Leading without referential authority –

In amateur sport (such as my cricket club) people pay to play. There is no referential authority as you may have, say in the workplace. There is no compensation-linked-performance-review at the end of a season at the amateur level! Managing such players is much more of an art than a science and hence more complex.

10. Organization skills –

In order to get a fixture scheduled and then executed to completion, a lot of organization and logistics have to be managed. Off-field communications become very important. One has to manage communications with a number of varied stakeholders not limited to ground officials, your own team, opposition team, umpires, etc.

11. Time management –

I remember a good player once came late for a three-day match. When the coin was tossed and the teams exchanged, he was not available and hence was kept in the reserves. Needless to say, he “carried the drinks” for three days for players of far less calibre. After that, he never came late to a game! One of my principal values is keeping time, developed over the years through sport.

12. Self Discipline

To play (and enjoy) a game, one has to maintain a certain level of basic fitness to ensure against injury and another level of sharper fitness to sustain your innings.

Spending long periods on a hot afternoon, grinding down the opposition bowling, or bowling over after over at a settled batsman, takes a lot out of you. This requires a high degree of self discipline, not only at practice but also during the game.

13. Perseverance –

I remember every evening after I return from work, religiously hitting a ball suspended using a rope and a sock 200 times. Not only did this perseverance help my hand-eye coordination, it also conditioned my bat. Needless to say, some of my best scores came when I persevered with this daily routine.

14. Patience –

For a long period, I noticed a pattern in that, I was getting out after making scores between 50 and 60 while batting. I was told that I needed to be patient and “not get satisfied” with this score, but push on to make a century (100 or more runs) . This thought helped me build patience and then slowly I started converting those good starts into centuries. Sport helps inculcate patience. Even while bowling to good batsmen who are playing well, one learns to be patient and not experiment with every delivery.

15. Self-confidence and backing your abilities –

When you accomplish something once, you build confidence in yourself. You start backing your abilities and know you can do it again. Whether it is getting someone out, pulling off a difficult catch or even getting a century, you develop the confidence in your own abilities. This is easily transferred to other activities including work.

16. Building a network of contacts –

I found some of my best friends on a cricket field.

Leadership Through Physical Education

* Selecting captains of teams with suitable leadership skills.

* Providing students with the opportunity to take decisions about their team.

* Forming committees and sub. groups led by students to undertake various functions.

Conclusion -

I am sure there are more attributes to sport and physical education than what I have listed here. Leadership skills are important on and off the field. They help create championship teams, great work in the office and most importantly, personal growth. Though this may be obvious, teamwork is one of the basic skills sports can teach participants. Teamwork helps motivate participants to do their part, assisting the team to reach its ultimate goal. Effective leadership does not only require passion and being visionary, but it needs leaders who have adequate leadership skills and a strong ability to work under pressure. In contrast to managers, effective leaders must ensure understanding a sport organization's internal systems but also the external environment. Leaders are constantly exposed to new and challenging situations what demands a high grade of flexibility and know-how.

References -

1. Alym, Freed. (1954). Is our Physical Education dynamic? The Journal of Health Physical Education and Recreation, Vol. 25, p. 27.
2. Ara, I., et al. (2004). Regular participation in Sports in association with enhanced Physical Fitness and lower Fat Mass in pre-pubertal boys, International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders, Vol. 28(12). pp. 1585-1593, PMID: 15303104.
3. Frost, Reuben, B. (1971). Psychological concepts applied to Physical Education and coaching, London: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.
4. Siribodhi Tinsiri. (2012). Social Media : A Tool or Threat in Education in the 21st Century. Paper presented at ICER 2012, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University.
5. www.cbse.nic.in
6. www.cbseportal.com
7. www.ncert.nic.in
8. www.nios.org