



INVESTMENTS IN SPORTS FOR SCHOOLS HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Educational institutes across the globe have been trying to integrate sports as part of their core education process, with the objective of offering an inclusive, high quality sporting experience to all students regardless of their existing talent, skills or disposition. This trend has also fueled an interesting debate within the school leaders - if they are making right amount of investments in running high quality sports program in their institutions, and if they are in right areas.

Over the past decade, EduSports has had a unique opportunity to discuss with and guide hundreds of schools across the country both in the private and government space, to integrate sports as part of their core education process, and improve the engagement levels of children with sport. As part of this work, we have also tried to understand the critical areas of investments in sports for schools, as well as help identify the actual costs (referred in this article as – 'Total Cost of Ownership' or TCO of Sports Programs) of running a high quality sports program in schools.

In this article, we are outlining our key findings in 2 areas viz. what constitutes a high quality or matured sports program, and what are investments required to sustain this program.



MATURITY OF SPORTS PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

The 4x2 rubric below outlines the critical attributes that can broadly be used to rate the existing maturity of schools in offering high quality sporting experience to 'all' children. By corollary, schools that have made investments in these attributes, have been able to run an inclusive sports program, integrated into their core education process

School Sports Maturity Bench marking Rubric

#	Key Attribute*	Rating
1	Opportunity to Play	High/ Medium / Low
2	Appropriate Content	High / Medium / Low
3	Relevant Resources	High / Medium/ Low
4	Management Focus on Sports	High / Medium / Low

*Notes:

Opportunity to Play means - availability of appropriate sports infrastructure, and adequate time for physical activity in the school time-table for all children;

Appropriate Content means - structured physical activity & sports curriculum for all grades, age-appropriate props/ equipment, individual level skills & fitness assessments, program monitoring & evaluation tools;

Relevant Resources means - trained Physical Education (PE) teachers trained for early years, primary and middle/ high schools

Management focus on sports means – clear vision, leadership and active involvement of school management in helping integrate sports in their core education process

If we take the item # 4 in the above table as a necessary (but not sufficient!) condition to trigger this process in your school, then we could break-down the above rubric for evaluation of sports maturity further by different categories (grades in schools) – as the requirements for each of these age-groups are very different:

#	Category	Opportunity to Play	Appropriate Content	Relevant Resources
1	Pre-Primary/ Pre-School	H/ M / L	H/ M / L	H/ M / L
2	Primary School	H/ M / L	H/ M / L	H/ M / L
3	Middle School	H/ M / L	H/ M / L	H/ M / L
4	High School, Colleges	H/ M / L	H/ M / L	H/ M / L

For instance, you do not need full football field or an athletic track for the pre-primary and primary children, and these might actually be counter-productive! – instead what you need are much smaller 'play pockets' that are safe for smaller children to play. So you if you do not have a large sports infrastructure, you could still rate yourself 'High' in the 'Opportunity to Play' attribute for the Pre-Primary and Primary School segment.

If you notice, this matrix could help you also evaluate the areas you might consider getting outside help from a specialist sports service provider. For instance, if the matrix is full of 'Mediums' and 'Lows' in pre-primary and primary schools – there could be a case for outsourcing the PE/ Sports program for these categories. But if you have only few 'Mediums' and 'Lows' among many 'Highs', you could choose to run the program completely in-house or enlist the external service providers specifically for these areas.

Now that we have established the critical attributes for the areas of investments, it would appropriate to move the discussion to the different elements of costs and investments required to create high quality sporting program in the schools. Based on our work over the past decade with schools, we have identified three distinct categories of costs or investments involved in the implementation of a matured sports/ PE program viz. 'Tangibles', 'Intangibles' and, what we call as 'Insights & Innovation' – and all of them roll up to what we refer as the 'Total Cost of Ownership' or TCO of sports programs in educational institutes.



INVESTMENTS REQUIRED (TCO) OF A HIGH QUALITY PE & SPORTS PROGRAM

The tables below outline the three different categories of costs or investments:

a. Category 1: Tangibles

A	Opportunity to Play	Optimized Sports Infrastructure* : Adequate, safe play-areas appropriate for different age-groups
B	Content	Props & Equipment : Age-appropriate equipment, adequate for concurrent classes & children on the ground Structured Curriculum : Lesson plans with clear learning outcomes, documented & mapped to school time-table/ PE periods Skill & Fitness Assessments : Standardized battery of tests with plans, data capture, normalization, scoring & reporting Program Monitoring & Evaluation : Monthly reports to school management on planned outcomes from program vs actual
C	Resources	Trained Physical Education Resources : Up-to 2 Physical Education Teachers for every 500 students (based on PE time-table), with appropriate training for handling different age-groups Periodic Training of PETs on implementing the designed PE program

*Note: Creating sports infrastructure in schools is typically a one-time investment (Capex), and the quantum depends on the type of school, available space for creating sports infrastructure, and other objectives of creating a talent or performance oriented sports. This investment is typically not considered as part of the ongoing investments (Opex) in running sports program, or for that matter, our TCO discussion in this article

a. Category 2: Intangibles

A	Opportunity to Play	Sports Infrastructure : On-going maintenance to keep the play-areas safe & play-worthy Sports equipment : Managing sports room inventory, maintenance, security & replenishment of props Available Time to Play : Maximizing & protecting the allocated PE periods in the school time-table
B	Content	Curriculum Upgrades : Changes in curriculum (new lesson plans) based on feedback of children, and new ideas coming from the PE Teachers Tools & Templates : Creation of ongoing tools/ templates, training material based on changing goals, board/ statutory level compliance requirements
C	Resources	Overall Program Management : Planning & managing overall program to meet the stated expectations & goals of the school Recruiting & staffing PE resources : Every time a PE Teacher leaves or whenever there is an increase in school capacity or student strength. Also managing 'downtime' if/ when a PE teacher leaves or is absent temporarily Managing PE team : On-going reviews, performance management, career progression & compensation



C. Category 3: Insights & Innovation

We have outlined some examples of insights from the sports program that have potentially led to roll out of new or innovative ideas to take the existing program to the next level. But there could potentially be number of other similar initiatives that have created additional value on top of the base-line program.

Insights & Innovation	Insights & Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing assimilation of best-practices & new ideas in physical education & sports from other educational institutes and forums in the country and outside• Analytics of & insights from collected data such as student assessments for identifying talent and showcasing impact of the program to parents• Rolling out of a talent identification & development center on top of the in-school physical education program• Experimenting with sports to build the social-emotional and leadership skills – in the middle/ high school students - especially girls• Sports days & other sports led events/ workshops for parent, community engagement• Teachers' health & wellness programs to build a culture of play & fitness in the overall school environment• Interventions to connect sports with the academics in the mainstream subjects for improved student engagement• Creating a sustainable stream of additional revenues and leadership/ visibility in the community through a calendar of after-school sports & events
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Based on our experience, we have found that most schools are keenly aware of the costs and investments only in the first category listed above: The tangibles. And even within this category of costs, if you leave out the one-time infrastructure creation investments, the proportion of investment in Resources (staffing & training of the PE teachers) far outweighs the proportion invested in content (curriculum, equipment, assessments & program monitoring tools). More importantly, most schools struggle to put a value to the costs or investments required in the category 2 and 3 viz. The Intangibles, and Insights/ Innovation. And that is quite worrisome – as these are in the investments that actually help the schools not just to sustain the value delivered by the category 1 investments, but can also help schools to get a return on their (category 1) investments.

This lack of understanding of different costs (especially the intangibles & innovation) by the schools also constrains their partnership with the specialist/ external service providers that assume category 2 and category 3 outcomes as part of their cost structures – while the focus of schools stays mostly on the category 1 investments or costs. This disparity often leads schools to in-source the complete program (sometime erroneously), and still make the similar or higher investments without realizing it.

We believe that a clarity of these different categories of costs or investments would lead to more balanced investments by the school across all the above categories, and also help them design more optimal sports programs by judiciously mixing elements of insourced services (owned by the school) and outsourced services (delivered by external service providers).

Lastly, based on our experience, if the schools are able to create and run a highly matured (and high quality) sports program based on the guidelines above, they should also be able to charge anywhere between 5% to 10% (based on the parent profile/ income group) of the tuition fee from the parents specifically for sports. They could then use up to 80% of these budgets to fund the above investments (mix of in-house and outsourced partnerships), and the rest could help fund the one-time/ on-going investments (capex) in the sports infrastructure.

