

Evolving Sports Governance in India: A Comparative Study with Western Model and Pathways for Future Reform

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ABSTRACT: *This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of sports governance in India, its current status, issues and effectiveness and perform contrasting it with thriving Western models (UK, USA, Europe) — making Indian sport the subject of study. As Indian sports governance are largely centralized, bureaucratic and politically dominated organisations, this is perhaps one key reason for transparency, professionalism and athlete welfare being in short supply. Meanwhile, Western countries are defined by governance models that prioritize independence, rule of law, financial accountability and athlete-centredness. This paper identifies some of the key differences related to regulatory body, commercial management, dispute resolution system and players in respective governance systems.*

The paper identifies aspects for reforms of sports governance system in India through this comparison, that needs to be address such as key structural reform; increasing transparency and accountability; legislation providing a strong foundation for development of sports, education and grassroots infrastructures. Other important reforms proposed include the establishment of a sports arbitration tribunal to solve disputes, and improved athlete welfare programs. With these takeaways from the west, India can bring its sports governance framework to a whole new level, allowing itself even bigger international competitiveness, but more importantly ensuring long term incremental progress and sustenance of entire set of sports streams.

KEYWORDS: *Sports governance, India, transparency, athlete welfare, sports law.*

INTRODUCTION

In an age where sports play a huge role in economic development, cultural exchange and diplomacy, governing of the same is one principle pillar. The UK, the USA and some part of Europe has effective governance lines focusing on transparency, professionalism, and financial integrity in place. Overarching systems balance both public and private elements to support responsible athletic governance, protect athletes' interests, provide ethical management services and ensure the sustainability of sports

organizations as well. In comparison, India still has a developing sports governance model that is mired in political interference, poor facilities and professionalism.

Good governance influences the integrity and success of sports, guiding the management of organizations, athletes' rights, and resource assignment. These are important for sustainable growth as it provides accountability, prevents corruption and fosters confidence among stakeholders.

Comparative Analysis of the Governance of Sports in India and the Western World: Identify gaps by comparing models followed in UK, USA and Europe Through unpacking case studies of best practice, the paper aims to offer reforms that create greater transparency and uphold athlete welfare and development. Its objective is to provide a roadmap for structural and legal reforms, enabling India to fortify governance systems and cement sustainable return on investments as well as competitiveness in international sports.

THE PRESENT SCENARIO OF SPORTS GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

OVERVIEW OF REGULATORY BODIES

The institutions of sports governance in India include the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) along with a plethora choosing to remain mum, especially national sports federations (NSFs) but most famous among the lot remains Board of Control for Cricket in India or BCCI. These bodies have different roles in managing and developing sports in India.

The government responsible for formulating National Sports Policy, funding and implementing development programs is the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. Established in 1984, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) is an apex body that lays down the policies and

guidelines for delivery systems. SAI is equally pivotal in the preparation of Indian athletes for mega events like Olympics, Commonwealth Games and other international competitions.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is the National Olympic Committee which works on the theory of India taking part in the Olympic Games, and other international, multi-sport events. It also oversees the activities of national sports federations. Although technically a private body, the BCCI is arguably the most powerful cricket administration above all in India. The BCCI, that singularly largest sports body is really an odd animal, because cricket, the most followed sport in a much larger scale than all other sports combined makes everything else a petty charity and the BCCI boasts of financial muscle that will look at home in a rights negotiating gym.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF INDIAN SPORTS FEDERATIONS

National sports federations (NSFs) administer most sports in India, under general supervision by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) and the Sports Authority of India (SAI). These federations govern their respective sports, running tournaments and picking national and international athletes. Nonetheless, such federations are frequently criticized for being excessively bureaucratic and politicized in structure.

Politicians or political minions have little, if any, knowledge of the sports they govern and it results in inefficient, unaccountable Federations. Additionally, the majority of these bodies lack independent funding — most or all funds come from the government — resulting in a deep dependence on public finances. This restricts federation freedoms, and in many cases slows down how fast one can make decisions.

CHALLENGES IN GOVERNANCE

India faces these key issues — political interference, transparency and accountability — in sports governance. A union of sport and politics with the former being led by the latter naturally leads to a blending in of private interests in this nexus for national development, and precisely this personalisation begins to sow the seeds for its conflict of interest. This political nexus not only impacts decision making but makes federations lose their professional character too.

The other major issue is transparency — many federations do not keep appropriate records of

financial dealings or activities publicly available. This opacity creates a breeding ground for corruption and mismanagement.

This lack of accountability creates even bigger governance problems. Federations go unpunished for poor or mismanagement leaving athletes with little access to training, facilities and finances.

CASE STUDIES: BCCI AND IOA GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The BCCI is at the heart of what ails Indian sport. The BCCI is a self-sustaining cash cow, but its administration has been frequently derided as opaque and unaccountable. In 2015, the Supreme Court of India-appointed Lodha Committee had pointed out structural deficiencies such as conflict of interest and absence of representation of players in decision-making bodies. Though they had proposed reforms, actually enacting it has proven a struggle against the status quo of the powerful.

Likewise, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has been at the centre of governance controversies — notably with respect to compliance with international Olympic norms. In 2012, the IOA was also suspended by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which was due to political intervention in elections and only after a change of guard was the ban revoked. It is performer of the mess that plagued Indian sports governance and them in dire need of reformation.

WESTERN SPORTS GOVERNANCE MODELS: AN OVERVIEW

THE UK MODEL: FA AND PREMIER LEAGUE GOVERNANCE

The United Kingdom is an international leader in the governance of sport, especially football through the Football Association (FA) and premier league. The FA is the governing body for football across all levels and countless arenas in England, whereas the Premier League is a professional division of elite modern soccer-play (more on that later) within the English landscape.

Football Association (FA): Founded in 1863, responsible for the rules, development and administration of football at all levels. It ensures that amateur and professional football are in equilibrium, putting grassroots first while having to juggle it with elite competitions. It also regulates matters related to player contracts, transfers and disputes.

Premier League Governance: The Premier is a private company, governed independently by its clubs under the oversight of FA rules. Both partners have a lot in common, as the league has heavy scrutiny on much of its management, including the development of players in Europe and financial fair play rules that keep competitive balance between clubs.

The FA and Premier League are just two of the sporting organisations in this country that appreciate openness, regularly releasing financial accounts and subject to regulatory frameworks backed up by audits by independent forensic accountants.

THE US MODEL: NCAA + MAJOR LEAGUES (NFL, NBA)

NCA: Oversees college sports in the US, covering athlete eligibility guidelines and other scholarship requirements and recruitment. Both of them also point to academic standards being expected of student-athletes, who can no longer just focus on sports. The NCAA is the most powerful competition in college sports, but with that power comes a lot of criticism, especially regarding how it does — or does not — allow athletes to be paid and the imbalance between the organization and its amateur competitors.

Major Leagues (NFL, NBA) :-Close leagues with a business interest in competitive balance. NFL/NBA/Major Professional US Leagues Such leagues have salary caps, revenue sharing, and rigorous rules regarding player contracts and transfers. Athlete welfare is at the forefront of both leagues, with policies for wellness benefits, retirement and anti-doping.

EUROPEAN SPORTS GOVERNANCE: UEFA, FIFA, AND ATHLETE MANAGEMENT

International governing bodies are by far the most well-known examples in Europe (UEFA – Union of European Football Associations; FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association)

UEFA: UEFA, the European governing body for football is responsible for prestigious tournaments including UEFA champions League and the European Championship It imposes strict financial fair play regulations to prevent clubs from overspending, and it redistributes income gained from international competitions in favor of football grassroots development.

FIFA: Not only does FIFA assist to run the World Cup but it also develops football on a global scale. Fifa, on

the other hand, is founded on ideals of openness and development in third world countries but has faced severe criticism for its corruption and unethical business practices since a good 10 years now.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS IN WESTERN SPORTS GOVERNANCE

Certain characteristics of sports governance that are bundled together across the Western world enable success.

Transparency: A hallmark of western sports governing bodies is their strict regulations regarding financial disclosure and decision-making processes. Audits conducted on the regular by independent professionals who report publicly deliver a level of accountability from top to bottom.

Professionalism: US and European sports organizations operate in a professional manner, segregating administration from politics.

Athlete Welfare — In the West, leagues and governing bodies have invested heavily into athlete welfare with healthcare, financial planning, and post-career support;

Financial Management: Good financial management is one of the trademarks of Western sports governance by which income from broadcasting rights, sponsorships & ticket sales is invested in development and infrastructure for the sport. Wonderful examples such as revenue-sharing models in the US leagues and UEFA's financial fair play regulations.

INDIA VS. WESTERN MODELS

Structural comparison: centralized vs. Decentralized governance

The governance of sports in India is very centralized — with many federations being directly governed or politically influenced by bodies (like the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)) which focus on a single sport. So much control centralization deprives autonomy and leads to decision making being inefficient and slow. Western nations (especially the UK and the USA) however, have a more decentralized approach to governance. In contrast to sports governing bodies such as the Football Association (FA) in UK or the National Football League (NFL) in USA, where each sport is overseen individually, this structure provides more professional venue management.

Regulatory and Legal Frameworks: Differences In Policies And Enforcement

In the West, sports organizations function within long-established legal structures. The USA has separate regulation for professional and collegiate sports, while Europe relies on both UEFA and FIFA to impose strict rules regarding finances and operations. There are also studies on how the absence of a wide-spread sports law in India leaves adverse effects with regulations being inconsistent and mostly outdated as sports federations function under ad-hoc rules. Without policy and enforcement, governance is never fully effective.

Transparency, Accountability, And Anti-Corruption Measures

Western sports governance highlights transparency and accountability. The Premier League, for example, is a public body and its financial accounts are available to everyone however you can bet that too many audits find their way into a drawer rather than the public domain. FIFA had compliance reforms after 2015, certainly not to the same elevated level of anti-corruption mechanisms that exist in Western countries. In India, limited transparency has resulted in corruption within organizations such as Indian Olympic Association IOA and BCCI with minimal accountability for leaders.

Athlete Welfare And Development: India's Lag In Player Rights

In the sports leagues in Western countries, they care about their athletes more than ever by providing insurance, retirement benefits and so on. These leagues also have strong player associations, as evidenced by the contracts and benefits that NBA and NFL players earn. Athlete welfare in India is poor, with no long-term career planning, little attention to health care and no pension scheme for retired athletes. The lack of players' rights protection in minor sports is an obstacle to player development.

Private vs. Public investment in sports development

I believe the predominant reason is that Western sports rely upon massive levels of private funding, and in the USA especially leagues are by-and-large financially independent. Profits driven by sponsorships, broadcasting concessions, and private sector investment flow back into expansion. On the other hand, Indian sports are sustained primarily by public funds creating funding constraints and stunting growth outside certain sporting activities (read 'Cricket').

Sports Governance Challenges In India

Lack of Professionalism in Governing Bodies

Most Indian sports federations are not professionally managed and run by politicians or non-sportspersons. Forcing a decision, any decision to be made leads to poor choices, less focus on athletes abilities and needs as well as ineffective delivery of plans by the organization.

Political Interference And Bureaucracy

Political interference is one of the most significant challenges facing sports governance in India. Most federations are run by politicians, giving rise to conflicts of interest and a slow degradation of the ethos of sport development. Processes take forever and more bureaucracy makes decisions sluggish, especially over athlete selection, infrastructure, or funding.

Financial Mismanagement and Corruption

One of the major problems with Indian sports is financial mismanagement. Indian sports bodies, on the other hand, are more opaque in their financial dealings than Western countries which have transparent mechanisms for oversight of public money. The need for tighter financial controls and audits are underscored by major instances of corruption within high-profile organisations ..

Absence of A Comprehensive Sports Law

An absence of uniform sports law .Unlike the western world, we do not have a uniformly applied sports statute which cover majority aspects from athlete contracts to player rights and financial oversight, there is no comprehensive legislation in India. The absence of global authority in one structure to rule sporting competitions allows sports federations across various disciplines to run inconsistently, without regulation and many open to corruption.

Dispute Resolution Issues: Lack of Sports Arbitration Mechanisms

This is mainly because India does not have a strong sports dispute resolution mechanism in place. Western countries have developed mechanisms like the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to deal with such issues but there is no central body in India to efficiently resolve sports-related disputes. Such conflicts take a long time to settle — between athletes and clubs or even federations, which again hamper the growth of sports in the country.

LESSONS FROM THE WEST: WHAT INDIA CAN LEARN

Adoption of Transparent and Independent Governing Structures

A key takeaway that India could implement and learn from country models of the West is. The governing structure must be open and independent. Ground zero in the UK is rightly seen as the FA -- and as we know, this largely independent sports federation operates pretty much free of government meddling allowing a professional approach to its affairs. The lessons from the above are fairly simple: India must shed political interference in its sports federations and hire professionals with expertise in governance and sport management.

Introduction of Modern Legal Frameworks For Sports Governance

Modern legal structures that delineate the obligations, powers and responsibilities of all parties—athletes, coaches and organizations alike—strengthen Western sports governance. The European Sports Model, with examples like UEFA's Financial Fair Play Regulations, among others, sets reasonable rules for financial stability and transparency in governance. India needs a Sports Law. Sports policy should cover all aspects of sports governance including financial dealings, athlete contracts and dispute resolution.

Enhancing Private Investment And Public-Private Partnerships

Policing of sports by the private sector is a well-known characteristic of Western governance in sports, particularly for the United States where leagues like the NBA and NFL are almost entirely based on features of private investment and public-private partnerships. These models have worked well in the development of sports infrastructure, making sports commercially viable and sustainable. Right now, there are very few private investments in sports infrastructure and development as the focus is solely on bringing about professionalism but encouraging private investments would help lessen dependency on government funding

The Role of Sports Arbitration in the Efficient Resolution of Disputes

CAS is the world authority on speed and fairness in sport dispute resolution. Currently, there is no apex body to handle such disputes in India. This would reduce dispute resolution times and the caseloads of

the courts, as well as increasing confidence among athletes and organisations by creating a means of resolving their disputes based specifically on the unique nature of sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTERING THE SPORTS GOVERNANCE IN INDIA.

India needs a fundamental structural revamping which guarantees rightful freedom and professionalism of work for every sporting body to reform the structure of sports governance. A way off — there is a lot that can be done here; federations need depoliticising and an infrastructure across such sport akin to the Premier League model where governance is not strangled by political tug-of-war will lead to efficiency and athletes looking at the sport as they look in a mirror and focus on themselves rather than bloody politics. This will allow more transparency and accountability within sports organisations which is a move towards professionalism across the entire sector.

Sporting, in different respects that extends from rights of athletes, to budget management and federations governance: everything requires a consolidated sport law. By learning from the UK's Sports Governance Code, India can outline and enforce guidelines on player contracts, transfer rules and ethics in a structured manner. The legal clarity would, in fact, ease the operation and push the standards of sporting governance to a higher level.

In combating corruption and mismanagement, transparency and accountability are paramount in sports federations. Similar to UEFA's Financial Fair Play model, regular audits, financial disclosures and independent oversight committees can make sure sports organizations run ethically and financially healthy.

And then there is a need to allocate funds on grassroots sports development as well. In much of the West — including, but not limited to, countries such as the UK — talent is cultivated by bringing young athletes through academies with access to public funding for world-class coaching and infrastructure. We have to develop a similar system in India by allocating resources for it so that each and every region gets equal opportunities.

Furthermore, setting up a sports arbitration tribunal similar to CAS can settle disputes relatively easily and fairly. It is just as important to extend management past cricket by using way of means of supporting lesser-recognized sports through cantered monetary

aid and sponsoring, because it provides towards a numerous and aggressive sports landscape.

CONCLUSION

The paper analyses sports governance in India, its underpinnings and how successful models from the west can assist in reforming Indian Sports. Indian sports governance is characterized by political interference, amateurism, financial misappropriation, and absence of legal structures. Comparatively, western nations like the UK and USA initiate a direct instruction on decentralized governance, transparency in operation and athlete welfare leading to stronger sporting performance through refusal to comply with corrupt practices.

Private investment and public-private partnerships are critical drivers of Indian-efforts, while the western models thrive on it, leading to independence and efficiency. Government funding as well as centralized control holds back India comparatively. Ejaz comments here that a very crucial area of focus in the West [athlete welfare] has not (yet) 'been adopted and embraced by India' where "Serious challenges persist to athlete health, without a clear policy or structures"

For India these key reforms would be the creation of transparent and independent governance structures, comprehensive sports laws, and a sports arbitration tribunal. In addition to these two areas, you also need investment in grassroots development and encouragement of lesser-known sports so that all can partake at a basic level. Adhere to new age governance practices and learn from the west, India can regain its status on the world sports platform while taking care of sports development in a holistic manner.

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