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# **The Role of Educational Institutions on Professionalizing Sports in Bangladesh**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgement .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Defining terms .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Objective of the study .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Significance of the Study .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Sample Questions .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Findings .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Analysis .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Limitations .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Abstract**

Recently, sports are contributing to the economic wellbeing of a nation or a country unprecedentedly, thus, many states are focusing on sports not only as a recreational activity, but also as an economic activity. Ironically, Bangladesh is among one of those countries that do not institutionalize sports integrally in their curriculum compared to the academic subjects. In most of the schools in Bangladesh, sports are not recognized as a potential arena of preparing professional athletes who are going to contribute to the economy; rather sports have been taken as merely physical education, or as recreational activity. In Bangladesh, a sport is considered typically as a physical and recreational activity. Unlike academic subjects such as English, Mathematics, History, etc., sports is regarded as an undervalued subject in terms of career aspiration. The purpose of the study is to find out the role of schools in institutionalizing sports to nurture, foster and develop sports person at the early stage of school days. This research is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires are used for data analysis. Surveys were conducted in two renowned schools in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Total number of participants of the study is 153. This study presents that schools do

not prioritize sports to flourish as a profession. One of the core reasons behind the lack of importance to sports is inadequate sports equipments provided by the schools and the government. Implementation of government policies and collaboration from the sports institution is essential in order to escalate the importance of professionalizing sports.

## **Introduction**

Sport is considered as a precondition for the building up of a healthy and productive nation. However, sports have generally been taken either as a recreational activity or merely physical education in most of the schools in Bangladesh. Although school years are the most important time of a child's life where they explore their passion and talents in particular areas, there is no institutional structure in schools in Bangladesh to encourage sports as a profession. Almost all the students are taught to think of working as a Doctor, Engineer, Economist, or in Government Services – these are the desirable future professions. Many students who are passionate about sports are suppressed from the very beginning of their lives, and often are being told to comply with traditional career aspirations. Parents are also reluctant to let their children explore their potential as sportsmen due to fewer opportunities in the sports sector. Many educational institutions have only one yearly sports day, whereas some do not emphasize on it at all. Additionally, Inter-school sports competitions are rarely held in most of the schools of Bangladesh. Compared to the given attention on subjects like Mathematics, Science, and English, the importance given to sports is negligible. On the other hand, Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) is the only national sports institute in Bangladesh that trains students in different areas of sports. This project focuses on the contribution of the educational institutions in preparing future sports professionals. Adding to that, this study finds out the perspective of schools and students to take sports as a career aspiration.

## **Literature Review**

Recently, sports are contributing to the economic wellbeing of a nation or a country unprecedentedly, thus, many states are focusing on sports not only as a recreational activity, but also as an economic activity. Russ Thorne in his newspaper article “Economic Impact of Sporting Events” published in 2015 depicted the picture of prospective economic growth led by the major sports events around the world. According to him, “It's an area (sports field) that universities have been researching in detail since the 1990s. Professor Simon Shibli is head of the Sports Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam and explains that events like 2014's British Open Golf Championships can make a big difference to the local economy – to the tune of £75m in the case of host region Liverpool and the Wirral.” However, the major sports events and the money involved in it vary across the globe, depending on the different kinds of sports valued in a particular country and the involvement of that country at the international sports events. In addition, the domestic sports competition is another contributing economic factor, though it works at a varied scale in different countries. Therefore, it is important to look for the scopes and opportunities that are involved in different kinds of sports for the economic wellbeing of a country. Subsequently, it is required to invest in potential sports sectors, or even to institutionalize sports domestically for establishing a good sports economy. The significant roles of educational institutions, thus, come into play for nurturing, developing, and ushering prospective sportspersons who are not only going to contribute to the overall economy of the country, but also going to bestow national and international pride upon that country. Ironically, Bangladesh is among those countries that do not consider sports as an integral and essential part of their educational institutions. In most of the schools in Bangladesh, sports are not recognized as a

potential arena of preparing professional athletes who are going to contribute to the economy; rather sports have been taken as merely physical education, or as recreational activity.

Many schools of Bangladesh, or even it would not be an overstatement to say that the most of the schools in Bangladesh integrate sports in their curriculum merely as a physical education activity or recreational activity, which de-emphasizes the value of sports in accelerating economic growth. Qazi Nasir Uddin in his book “The Other side” pointed out, “schools, colleges, and universities in Bangladesh are imparting education on only academic subjects such as English, Mathematics, History, Philosophy, Chemistry, or Biology, etc., not paying heed to sports.” Schools are generally and especially emphasize on excelling in academic subjects, leaving behind the extent of flourishing sports as career aspiration.

### **Defining terms**

**Professionalization of Sports:** According to dictionary definition, the social process whereby people come to engage in an activity for pay or as a means of livelihood. It is a process that drives an individual to transform a particular activity into profession. In this study we will explore how educational institutions contribute to the process of professionalization of sports.

### **Objective of the study**

- To demonstrate the level of importance given by the educational institutions in Bangladesh on sports
- To study the role of educational institutions in promoting sports and producing potential sports professionals.

### **Significance of the Study:**

Our research will provide the opportunity to have a different perspective on sports. It will add value to sports sector of the school's by introducing our research idea to them. Furthermore, we

will be representing AUW in front of different educational institutions. As well as promote professionalization of sports to AUW community.

### **Methodology**

This research is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. For quantitative research we used survey questionnaires and collected data from 148 students. We also prepared structured and semi structured questionnaires for taking interviews from schools teachers. Our targeted population was the students of class 6, 7 and 9 from three renowned schools of Chittagong district. Adding to that, we conducted a case study from BKSP to get the insight of the current condition of sports professionalization in Bangladesh. For conducting the interview and survey, we took permission from the authority of the respective schools and sports institution. At first we told the students what our research is about briefly for ensuring active participation in our research. We requested to the authority to give us some time in the sports class period so that it doesn't affect rest of the classes. We kept the participants' information confidential by keeping their identity anonymous. We stored their data in the participant form in such a way that only the five researchers and the supervisor can access to the data. Then, we used data cleaning procedure for sorting the data and applied qualitative and quantitative data analysis through frequency distribution and pie chart

### **Sample Questions:**

1. How many hours a week, on average, do you participate in sport in your school?

- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 4+ hours

Not applicable

2. Are you interested to participate in sport at school?

Yes

No

3. Do your teachers encourage you to take sports seriously?

Yes

No

Sometimes

4. To what level of importance does your school give to its sports activities?

Very high

High

Neutral

Low

Very low

5. Do you want to get additional support for sports from your school?

Yes



No

6. From the list of the reasons, please choose your top two reasons for participating in sports?

It makes me healthier

It is a great fun

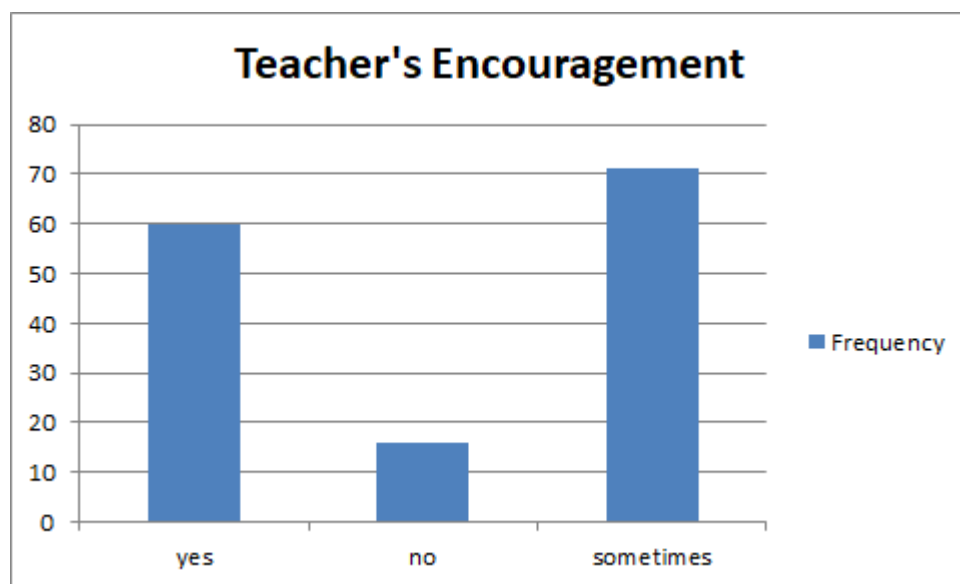
I like to try new activities

I dream to be a sportsman

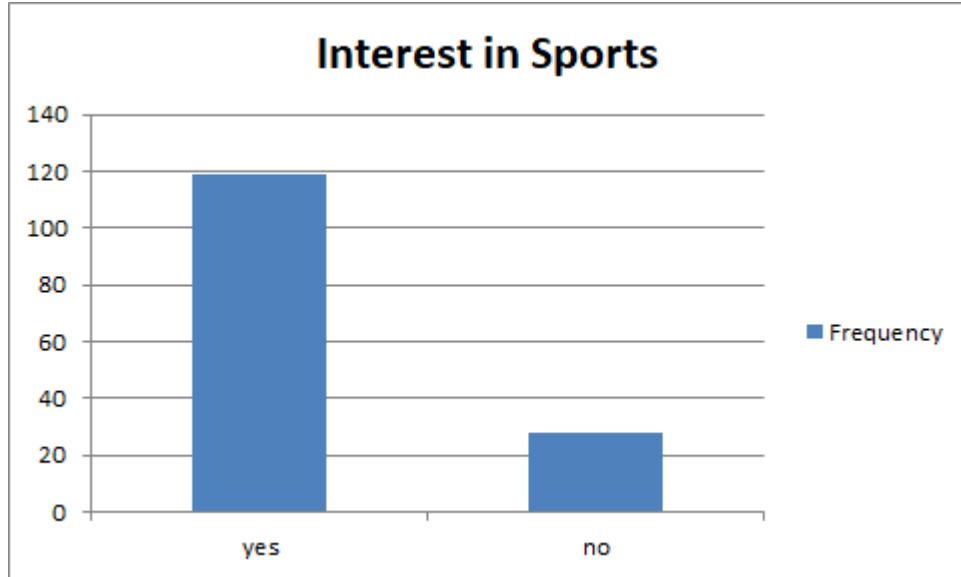
Sports is a good career option for me

### Findings

41% of the participants (both female and male students) responded that they are encouraged by their teachers whereas 48% think that they are encouraged sometimes. This shows that the level of encouragement from the teachers is not very high in the institutions (especially for the female students).

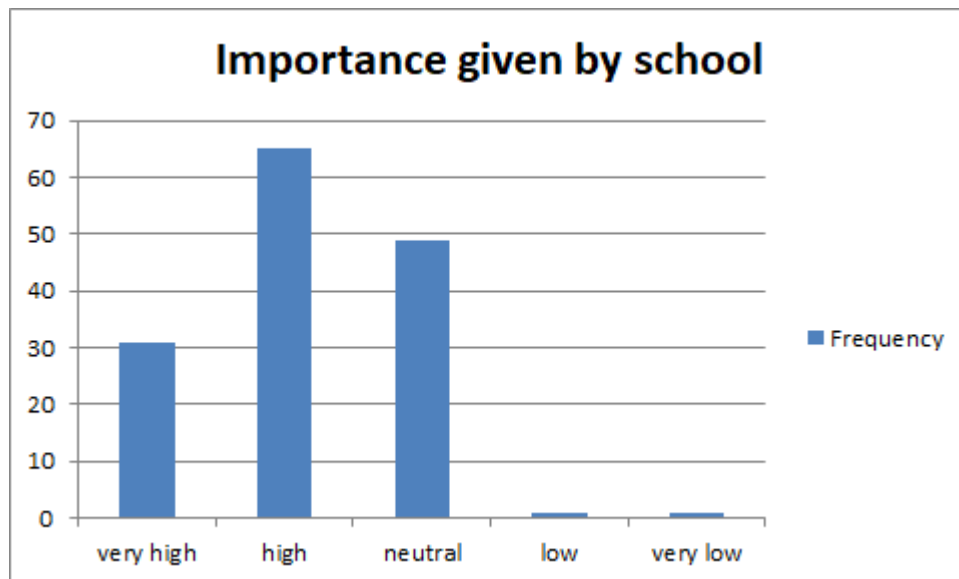


81% of the participants expressed their interest in sports whereas only 19% didn't.

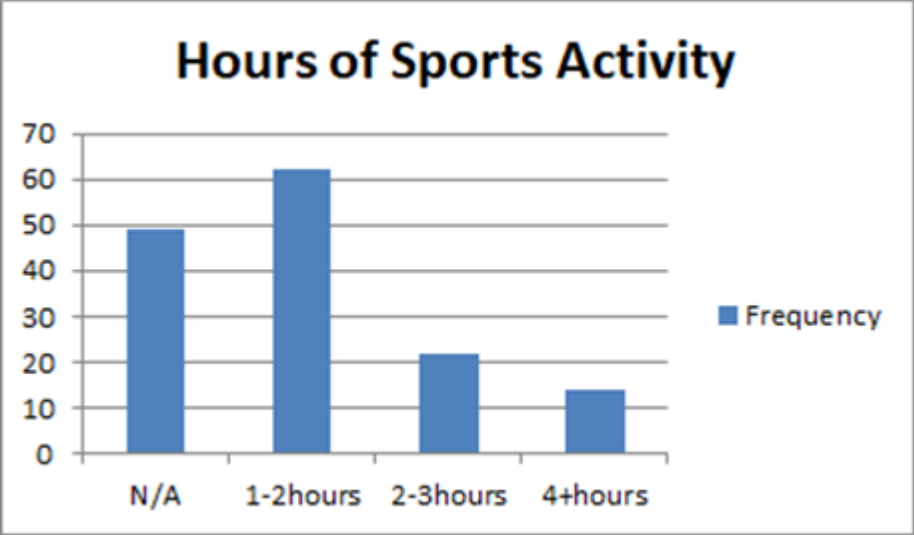


44% of the participants agreed that high importance is given to sports by their schools and 21% of them said very high importance is given to sports. 33% of the participants stayed neutral.

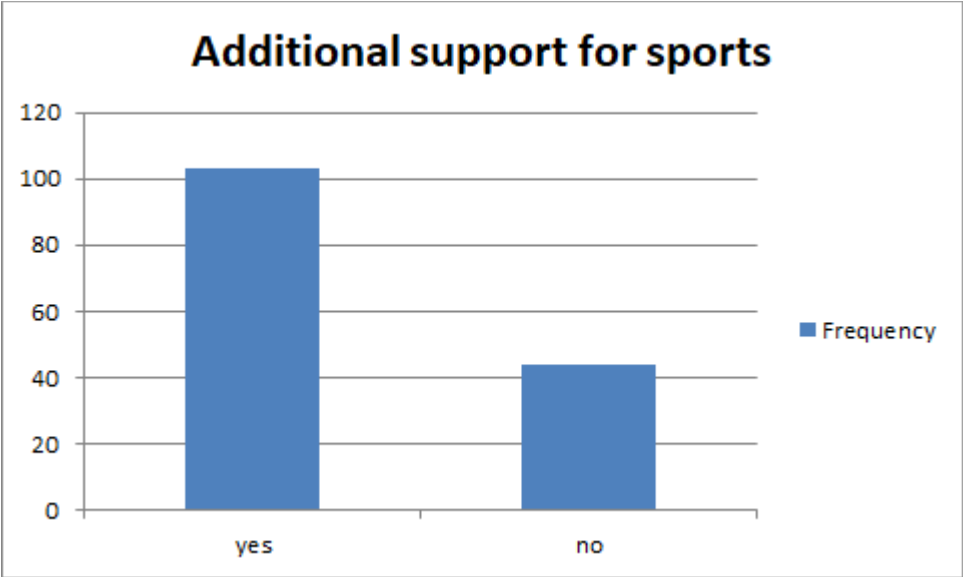
42% of the participants said 1-2 hours is given to sports activity by the school per week, 33% of the participants (N/A). Only 10% of the participants said that more than 4 hours is given to sports activity per week. Although most of the participants said that high importance is given to sports activity, it is seen that only 1-2 hrs per week is given to sports activity.



70% of the participants want additional support from the school for sports activities whereas only 30% do not want any additional support for sports. This shows that the institutions are lagging behind in terms of supporting and understanding the need of the students for sports.



40% of the participants take sports activity as great fun, 33% think of it as an activity that makes them healthy, 15% of them wants to be a sportsman and 22% want to participate in sports because they want to try something new.



## **Analysis**

Although, educational institutions are spending few hours in sports with comparison to other subjects, students find it that their schools are giving enough importance to sports. We found that, students are more likely to take sports as a recreational activity rather than taking it as a professional opportunity. So we observed that, educational institutions integrate sports activities merely as a way of physical fitness and recreational purpose. Since, sports economy around the world is flourishing rapidly, under these circumstances; there is higher possibility to lose a big chunk of potential sports person who could contribute to sports economy of Bangladesh.

However, students along with sports teachers highly stressed the fact that additional support is required to take sports at the professional level. Interviewing sports teachers in different schools shed light on the necessity of additional support from government regarding sports. One of the teachers from Cantonment English School and College (CESC) urged for financial assistance from the government for providing enough sports equipments. Adding to the statement, another sports teacher from Cantonment Public School and College (CCPC) claimed that more qualified sports instructors can be appointed and more frequently inter house competition can be arranged if enough financial assistance is ensured. Besides, a general teacher opined about the abolishment of academic grading system by the government for sports based courses. She pointed out about the fact that students do not get enough incentive to be engaged in sports activities. It clearly identifies ineffective policies of government that creates barrier to drive sports as a professional aspiration.

## **Limitations**

Very little scholarly articles or reports have been found on this topic. Getting permission to conduct formal interview at BKSP has been the biggest challenge. One of the schools didn't approve us to conduct research in their school due to busy schedule of exams and official purpose.

### **Conclusion**

However, we concluded that sports is taken as a physical fitness or recreational activity. Due to inadequate sports equipments, shortage of appointed sports trainer in school, ineffective government policies, sports are not getting enough incentives to rise as a desired profession for most of the students. In order to extract potential sports professional from Bangladesh, educational institutions should start fueling the process of sports professionalization. Sports should be given equal importance unlike academic subjects. In that case, collaboration from government and sports institutions is necessary.

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