

# Governance, Leadership, and Policy Frameworks for Sports Development in Higher Education

**Dr. Bhaskar Ankem**

Assistant Professor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, India  
E-mail: [bhaskar.ankem@gmail.com](mailto:bhaskar.ankem@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The development of sport in higher education depends not only on facilities and funding but on the quality of the institutions that direct it. How sport is governed, how it is led and how it is guided by policy together determine whether resources are used well and whether sporting potential is realised. This paper examined the status of governance, leadership and policy frameworks for sports development in higher education institutions and analysed how these factors relate to the effectiveness of sports development. A descriptive and analytical survey was conducted among two hundred respondents, comprising sports administrators, heads of physical education, coaches and student-athlete representatives in higher education institutions in Andhra Pradesh. A structured questionnaire measured governance quality, leadership effectiveness, policy adequacy and the perceived effectiveness of sports development, each through validated sub-scales rated on a five-point scale. Percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used in the analysis. The findings show that governance and leadership were rated as moderate, while policy frameworks were the weakest of the three areas. Governance, leadership and policy were each significantly and positively related to the effectiveness of sports development, and together they explained about half of the variation in it, with leadership the strongest single predictor. The study concludes that strengthening governance, developing capable leadership and putting clear policies in place are essential to advancing sport in higher education, and it offers recommendations to that end.

**Keywords:** Sports governance, leadership, policy frameworks, sports development, higher education, transformational leadership, institutional management.

## 1. Introduction

Sport in higher education is often discussed in terms of fields, equipment and funding, yet these tangible resources are only part of the story. Whether they are acquired, maintained and used to good effect depends on something less visible but no less important: the way sport is governed, led and guided by policy. Two institutions with similar facilities may achieve very different sporting outcomes, and the difference frequently lies in the quality of their management. For this reason the governance, leadership and policy frameworks that surround sport in higher education deserve serious study in their own right.

Governance refers to the systems and processes through which an organisation is directed and held to account. Good governance is characterised by accountability, transparency, the meaningful participation of those affected, and sound strategic planning. In the context of sport in higher education, governance determines how decisions are made, how resources are allocated and how performance is monitored. Where governance is strong, sport is managed deliberately and answerably; where it is weak, decisions may be arbitrary, resources may be wasted and opportunities may be lost.

Leadership is closely related but distinct. While governance concerns the structures of direction and control, leadership concerns the people who inspire, guide and mobilise others within those structures. Effective leaders articulate a vision for sport, motivate staff and athletes, and create the conditions in which others can succeed. The study of leadership distinguishes between approaches that rely chiefly on rewards and supervision and those that seek to transform and elevate those who are led, and the balance between these approaches can profoundly affect what an institution achieves.

Policy provides the third element of the framework. A policy sets out an institution's intentions and the rules by which it will pursue them, covering matters such as the provision and funding of sport, the identification and support of talent, and the monitoring of results. Clear and well-implemented policies translate good intentions into consistent action, while their absence leaves sport to the chance of individual enthusiasm. Together, governance, leadership and policy form the institutional foundation on which all sports development rests.

In India, higher education has been encouraged to take a more active and organised role in the development of sport, and national policy increasingly expects institutions to nurture sporting talent alongside academic excellence. Yet the institutional capacity to meet this expectation varies widely, and the governance, leadership and policy frameworks that

would support it are not always in place. Understanding the current state of these frameworks, and how they relate to actual sporting outcomes, is therefore a matter of practical importance for the advancement of sport in higher education. The present study accordingly set out to examine the status of governance, leadership and policy frameworks for sports development in higher education institutions and to analyse the relationship between these frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development. In doing so it seeks to move the discussion of sport in higher education beyond facilities and funding to the institutional foundations that determine how well those resources are used.

## 2. Review of Literature

The study of governance in sport has matured considerably over the past two decades. Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) provided a foundational treatment of sport governance, setting out the structures and principles by which sporting organisations are directed. Henry and Lee (2004) earlier identified the dimensions of good governance in sport, including accountability and transparency, which have since become standard reference points. Geeraert, Alm and Groll (2014) applied such principles in an analysis of international sport governing bodies and demonstrated that the quality of governance can be assessed systematically and varies widely between organisations.

A particularly influential line of work has examined the strategic role of governing boards. Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald (2009) argued that effective boards are actively involved in strategy rather than confined to oversight, and Ferkins and Shilbury (2012) developed this view by showing how strategic capability distinguishes good boards. Shilbury, Ferkins and Smythe (2013) added a grounded, experiential perspective, drawing on the lived realities of those who govern sport. Collectively these studies establish that governance is not a mere formality but a determinant of organisational performance.

The literature on leadership offers a complementary foundation. Burns (1978) introduced the distinction between transactional and transforming leadership, and Bass and Riggio (2006) developed the theory of transformational leadership, which emphasises vision, inspiration and the development of followers. Yukl (2013) provided a comprehensive account of leadership in organisations more broadly. Within sport specifically, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed a scale of leadership behaviour, and Chelladurai (2007) advanced a multidimensional model that relates leader behaviour to the satisfaction and performance of athletes. This body of work shows that leadership can be conceptualised and measured and that it bears directly on outcomes in sport.

The role of policy has been examined chiefly in the field of sport policy analysis. Houlihan (2005) proposed a framework for analysing public-sector sport policy, drawing attention to the processes by which policy is formed and implemented, and Green (2005) examined how policy operates across different levels of the sporting system. Although much of this work addresses national policy, its insights apply equally to the institutional level, where the existence, clarity and implementation of policy shape what is achieved.

Taken together, the literature establishes that governance, leadership and policy are each meaningful and measurable determinants of performance in sport, and that good governance, capable leadership and sound policy are associated with better outcomes. What is less commonly examined is how these three frameworks operate together within higher education institutions and how strongly they relate to the effectiveness of sports development in that setting. The present study addresses this gap by examining the three frameworks jointly and analysing their relationship with sporting outcomes.

## 3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it directs attention to the institutional foundations of sport in higher education, an area often overshadowed by discussion of facilities and funding. By examining governance, leadership and policy together rather than in isolation, it offers an integrated view of the management of sport and reveals how these elements combine to influence outcomes. By analysing the relationship between the three frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development, it moves beyond description to explanation, identifying which factors matter most and providing a basis for targeted improvement. The findings are of direct value to university administrators, sports directors and policymakers who seek to strengthen sport in higher education, and they contribute to the wider scholarship on sport management by applying its concepts to a higher-education setting that has received limited attention. In these ways the study addresses a question of both practical and theoretical importance.

## 4. Objectives of the Study

The study is built around the following two objectives:

1. To examine the status of governance, leadership and policy frameworks for sports development in higher education institutions.
2. To analyse the relationship between governance, leadership and policy frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development in higher education institutions.

## 5. Hypotheses of the Study

In support of these objectives, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H1: There is no significant relationship between governance, leadership and policy frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development in higher education institutions.

H2: Governance, leadership and policy frameworks do not significantly predict the effectiveness of sports development in higher education institutions.

## 6. Research Methodology

### 6.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical survey design. The descriptive element served to document the current status of governance, leadership and policy frameworks, while the analytical element examined the relationships between these frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development. This combination was appropriate because the study sought both to describe a situation and to explain the connections within it.

### 6.2 Population and Sample

The population comprised those involved in the direction and delivery of sport in higher education institutions in Andhra Pradesh. A sample of two hundred respondents was selected, drawn from four groups so that the perspectives of those who govern, manage, coach and take part in sport were all represented. The inclusion of student-athlete representatives ensured that the experience of those whom the frameworks are meant to serve was also captured.

### 6.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified purposive sampling technique was used. Respondents were grouped by their role in the sporting system, and participants were then selected from each group to ensure adequate representation. Institutions of different types were included so that the sample reflected the variety of higher education in the region.

### 6.4 Tools for Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after a review of the relevant literature. The instrument measured four constructs: governance quality, through sub-scales for accountability, transparency, participation and strategic planning; leadership effectiveness, drawing on transformational and transactional dimensions; policy adequacy, covering the existence, funding, talent-support and monitoring aspects of policy; and the perceived effectiveness of sports development as the outcome. All items were rated on a five-point scale. The instrument was reviewed by experts for content validity, and its internal consistency was found to be satisfactory in a pilot test.

### 6.5 Statistical Techniques

The data were analysed using percentage analysis and the mean and standard deviation to describe the status of the frameworks, Pearson correlation to examine the relationships between the frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development, and multiple regression to determine how far the three frameworks together predicted that effectiveness. A significance level of five per cent was adopted throughout.

## 7. Results and Discussion

### 7.1 Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents by role, institution type and experience in their current role.

**Table 1**  
**Profile of the Respondents (N = 200)**

| Variable           | Category                        | No. (%)   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Role               | Sports administrators           | 36 (18.0) |
|                    | Heads of physical education     | 44 (22.0) |
|                    | Coaches                         | 70 (35.0) |
|                    | Student-athlete representatives | 50 (25.0) |
| Institution type   | University                      | 78 (39.0) |
|                    | Government college              | 74 (37.0) |
|                    | Private / autonomous college    | 48 (24.0) |
| Experience in role | Up to 5 years                   | 82 (41.0) |
|                    | 6 – 10 years                    | 71 (35.5) |

| Variable | Category           | No. (%)   |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|
|          | More than 10 years | 47 (23.5) |

### 7.2 Status of Governance (Objective 1)

The first objective concerned the status of the three frameworks. Table 2 reports the mean scores for the dimensions of governance.

**Table 2**  
**Status of Governance Dimensions (Mean on a five-point scale)**

| Governance Dimension      | Mean | SD   |
|---------------------------|------|------|
| Accountability            | 3.18 | 0.86 |
| Stakeholder participation | 3.05 | 0.90 |
| Transparency              | 2.96 | 0.93 |
| Strategic planning        | 2.84 | 0.95 |
| Overall governance        | 3.01 | 0.79 |

Governance was rated as moderate overall. Accountability and participation scored slightly higher, suggesting that institutions are reasonably answerable for sport and reasonably open to those involved, while transparency and, in particular, strategic planning scored lower. The relative weakness of strategic planning is significant, since planning is the dimension through which governance translates into deliberate, forward-looking development rather than reactive administration.

### 7.3 Status of Leadership

Table 3 reports the mean scores for the dimensions of leadership.

**Table 3**  
**Status of Leadership Dimensions (Mean on a five-point scale)**

| Leadership Dimension             | Mean | SD   |
|----------------------------------|------|------|
| Transformational leadership      | 3.34 | 0.82 |
| Transactional leadership         | 3.12 | 0.84 |
| Overall leadership effectiveness | 3.28 | 0.77 |

Leadership was rated somewhat more favourably than governance, with the transformational dimension, which concerns vision and the motivation of others, scoring highest. This is an encouraging sign, since transformational leadership is the dimension most strongly associated in the literature with the inspiration and development of those who are led. Even so, the scores indicate clear room for improvement, and the moderate rating of leadership effectiveness overall suggests that the leadership of sport in these institutions is competent but not yet exceptional.

### 7.4 Status of Policy Frameworks

Table 4 reports the mean scores for the dimensions of the policy framework.

**Table 4**  
**Status of Policy Framework Dimensions (Mean on a five-point scale)**

| Policy Dimension                         | Mean | SD   |
|--|------|------|
| Existence of a formal sports policy      | 2.88 | 0.97 |
| Funding and budget policy                | 2.71 | 1.02 |
| Monitoring and evaluation policy         | 2.66 | 1.00 |
| Talent identification and support policy | 2.59 | 1.05 |
| Overall policy framework                 | 2.71 | 0.88 |

Policy was the weakest of the three frameworks. Every dimension scored below the mid-point of the scale, with the policy for identifying and supporting talent scoring lowest of all. This finding is of considerable concern, because it is

precisely through such policies that institutions convert good intentions into the systematic development of athletes. The weakness of funding and monitoring policy similarly suggests that, even where sport is valued, the formal mechanisms to support and evaluate it are often lacking. The overall picture is of institutions whose governance and leadership outpace their policy, leaving a gap between how sport is directed and the rules that should guide it.

### 7.5 Relationship between the Frameworks and Sports Development (Objective 2)

The second objective concerned the relationship between the frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development. Table 5 presents the correlations among the four constructs.

**Table 5**  
**Correlation Matrix of the Study Constructs (N = 200)**

| Construct          | Gov. | Lead. | Policy | Dev. |
|--------------------|------|-------|--------|------|
| Governance         | 1.00 | —     | —      | —    |
| Leadership         | 0.61 | 1.00  | —      | —    |
| Policy             | 0.55 | 0.52  | 1.00   | —    |
| Sports development | 0.58 | 0.62  | 0.54   | 1.00 |

All the correlations were positive and statistically significant at the one per cent level. The effectiveness of sports development was most strongly related to leadership, followed by governance and then policy, while the three frameworks were also moderately correlated with one another, as would be expected of related aspects of institutional management. The first null hypothesis, that there is no significant relationship between the frameworks and the effectiveness of sports development, was therefore rejected. To examine how the frameworks operate together, a multiple regression was conducted, the results of which are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Multiple Regression Predicting Sports Development Effectiveness**

| Predictor  | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | t    | p     | Result      |
|------------|------------------|------|-------|-------------|
| Leadership | 0.34             | 4.91 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Governance | 0.28             | 3.96 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Policy     | 0.21             | 3.08 | 0.002 | Significant |

The regression model was statistically significant and explained approximately half of the variation in the effectiveness of sports development, indicating that the three frameworks together are a powerful influence on sporting outcomes. Each of the three predictors made a significant independent contribution, with leadership the strongest, followed by governance and then policy. The second null hypothesis, that the frameworks do not significantly predict the effectiveness of sports development, was therefore also rejected. The results show clearly that how sport is led, governed and guided by policy matters a great deal to what institutions achieve.

### 7.6 Challenges in the Management of Sport

Respondents were asked to identify the principal challenges facing the management of sport in their institutions. Their responses are summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Perceived Challenges in the Management of Sport (multiple responses)**

| Challenge                                   | Responses | %    |
|---|-----------|------|
| Absence of a clear written sports policy    | 138       | 69.0 |
| Limited strategic planning for sport        | 124       | 62.0 |
| Inadequate or unpredictable funding         | 131       | 65.5 |
| Weak monitoring of outcomes                 | 103       | 51.5 |
| Limited authority of those who manage sport | 89        | 44.5 |

The challenges most frequently cited were the absence of a clear written sports policy and limited strategic planning, closely followed by inadequate funding. These responses align closely with the survey findings, confirming that the policy framework is the weakest link and that strategic planning within governance also requires strengthening. The

relatively common complaint about the limited authority of those who manage sport points to a further governance issue, namely that responsibility for sport is not always matched by the power to act.

## 8. Major Findings

1. Governance was rated as moderate, with accountability and participation stronger than transparency and strategic planning.
2. Leadership was rated slightly more favourably than governance, with the transformational dimension the strongest.
3. The policy framework was the weakest of the three areas, with the policy for talent identification and support scoring lowest.
4. Governance, leadership and policy were each significantly and positively related to the effectiveness of sports development.
5. Together the three frameworks explained about half of the variation in sports development effectiveness, with leadership the strongest predictor.
6. The challenges most often reported, the absence of a clear sports policy and limited strategic planning, mirror the weakest areas identified in the survey.

## 9. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the status of governance, leadership and policy frameworks for sports development in higher education and to analyse how these frameworks relate to sporting outcomes. The evidence shows that the institutions studied possess moderate governance and reasonably capable leadership but markedly weaker policy frameworks, and that all three frameworks are significantly and positively related to the effectiveness of sports development. Most importantly, the three together explain a substantial share of the differences in sporting outcomes between institutions, which confirms that the way sport is managed is a genuine determinant of what is achieved, not merely a background condition.

The practical message of these findings is clear. If higher education institutions wish to advance sport, they must look beyond facilities and funding to the institutional foundations that govern their use. This means strengthening governance, especially the strategic planning through which sport is directed deliberately rather than reactively; cultivating leadership, particularly the visionary and motivating qualities that inspire staff and athletes; and, above all, developing the clear and well-implemented policies that the study found to be most lacking, including policies for funding, for the identification and support of talent, and for the monitoring of results. Because leadership emerged as the strongest single influence, investment in developing capable sporting leaders is likely to yield the greatest return. Through deliberate attention to these foundations, higher education can build the institutional capacity that lasting sports development requires.

## 10. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The study has limitations that should be acknowledged. It relied on the perceptions of those involved in sport rather than on objective audits of governance documents or sporting results, and it was confined to one region, so the findings should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive. The cross-sectional design establishes relationships but cannot by itself prove the direction of cause and effect. Future research could combine perceptual data with objective records of governance and performance, could compare institutions across several regions, and could follow institutions over time to examine how changes in their frameworks affect their sporting outcomes. Case studies of particularly successful institutions would also illuminate how good governance, leadership and policy work together in practice. Research of this kind would build on the present findings and deepen understanding of how sport in higher education can best be managed.

## References

1. Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
2. Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
3. Chelladurai, P. (2007). Leadership in sports. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 113–135). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
4. Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports: Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 2(1), 34–45.
5. Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2012). Good boards are strategic: What does that mean for sport governance? *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(1), 67–80.
6. Ferkins, L., Shilbury, D., & McDonald, G. (2009). Board involvement in strategy: Advancing the governance of sport organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23(3), 245–277.
7. Geeraert, A., Alm, J., & Groll, M. (2014). Good governance in international sport organizations: An analysis of the 35 Olympic sport governing bodies. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 6(3), 281–306.



8. Green, M. (2005). Integrating macro- and meso-level approaches: A comparative analysis of elite sport development in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 5(2), 143–166.
9. Henry, I., & Lee, P. C. (2004). Governance and ethics in sport. In J. Beech & S. Chadwick (Eds.), *The business of sport management* (pp. 25–42). Harlow: Pearson Education.
10. Houlihan, B. (2005). Public sector sport policy: Developing a framework for analysis. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40(2), 163–185.
11. Hoye, R., & Cuskelly, G. (2007). *Sport governance*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
12. Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.