



Role of sport in promoting values

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The session was introduced and key ideas of sport as a universal language, a social value, and an economic value were proposed and explained. The place of sports within universities received special consideration, approaching the university as a platform to promote sports among students and the general public. The relationship between universities and sports is argued to be of great importance: learning outside of the classroom is crucial in the development of certain skills and, ultimately, self-development.

Sports teach teamwork and can be of great support in the development of leadership skills. Sports also confront students with emotion, competition and the notion of defeat. One has to deal with regulations, rules, and opponents; it is a learning process. Thus, conditions within sport can help students manage and prepare themselves for professional life, teaching them how to deal with ups and downs and how to overcome (personal) hurdles. Session participants agreed that sports could help with self-evaluation: knowing your own limits, discovering your strong points, and being aware of your weaknesses.

Other advantages of promoting sports within the university includes the possibility to educate students about physical health, encouraging an active lifestyle. This in turn fosters future educators and raises awareness of obesity as a worldwide problem. One example from a participant's personal experience: being in charge of soccer training cultivates instructional capabilities. From an economic perspective, investment in sport and sport education could be a key strategy to reduce spending in social care (due to health complications) on a long-term basis.

In relation to public awareness of physical health, promoting sports in universities will also have practical implications in terms of accessibility and venues. Leaving university sports to the private sector can be limiting, while opening university venues to the public integrates sports into public space and offers citizens more opportunities to participate in sports. As such, sports can also act as a bridge between the university and the larger community in which it is imbedded. Sport clubs offer new opportunities to broaden network, communicate outside of usual groups of interaction, and perhaps act as a social support system.

One question about opening university sports to the public does arise: what about commercialisation of venues? How would this affect the university's autonomy as an independent institution? Nowadays, some universities like to brand their name through sports. Branding and sponsoring helps with acquiring better venues, but does it actually attract students? As of yet, there are no clear answers.

On a final note, the session ended with the proposed idea of the university as a platform for building knowledge about physical health and encouraging mass participation in sports. Skills learnt outside of the classroom are also important. Sports are outside the classroom, but can still function inside the university: sport can be an effective bridge in-between the university and community.