

## **Title of the practice**

### **ASSURE (Alagappa Sports Supportive Utilities Reach Everyone)**

## **Objectives of the Practice**

- To promote health and fitness awareness among sedentary individuals.
- To develop tailored fitness programs for middle-aged and elderly persons to combat hypokinetic diseases.
- To formulate specialized training programmes for young aspiring athletes enabling them to achieve excellence in competitive sports.

## **Intended Outcomes**

As a result of contemporary lifestyle, choices of people including children and young students have devolved into a sedentary way of life, devoid of physical activity or exercises. Due to demanding work environments and a constant pressure of their jobs, middle aged individuals also experience negative consequences in regard to their lifestyle, health and physical appearance. Through ASSURE program, Alagappa University addresses this issue, by persuading the program's participants to let go of their previously sedentary lifestyles and adopt a health-conscious way of life. Students who have lived passive lifestyles get their fitness assessed, while young athletes receive rigorous training regimens to train their mind and physique for enhancing their overall performance. Similarly, the middle-aged participants are evaluated for their health conditions and fitness programs with consideration to their age and potential underlying health issues are designed to improve their overall physical and mental health.

## **Principles and Concepts**

In order to ensure that the programme reaches wider audience, the activities are conducted free of charge without any financial commitment to the attendees. The practice sessions are conducted frequently on a daily basis, with one session during early dawn and the second session at dusk. The participants are encouraged to participate in the activity daily without fail, to reap the maximum benefits. Apart from the training and practice sessions, the participants are also engaged in friendly competitions to bring the best out of their athletic capabilities. The winners of these competitions are honoured on the succeeding day, to further involve the participants in the regimen.

## The context

- **Age Diversity:** Participants span various age groups, requiring tailored training programs for each.
- **Varying Fitness Levels:** Each participant possesses unique physical attributes, complicating assessment and program customization.
- **Socioeconomic Disparities:** Diverse financial backgrounds hinder access to proper uniforms and quality sports gear.
- **Nutritional Concerns:** Many participants follow average diets, potentially insufficient for rigorous training regimes.
- **Distance and Energy Drain:** Daily travel of 2 to 3 kilometers to the playground drains energy before training.
- **Time Constraints:** Training sessions are limited due to school bus schedules, typically starting between 7:30 am and 8:00 am.
- **Equipment Management:** Coordinating equipment for around 150 participants across different age groups poses logistical hurdles.

## The Practice

The ASSURE program stands out as one of the best practices and a flagship initiatives in the University campus. This dynamic program starts before sunrise, as participants spanning ages 5 to 50 actively report to the playground and begin their training. The program's visibility has increased significantly, leading to a dramatic rise in the number of participants. Children and their parents in and around Karaikudi benefit greatly from this initiative. Participants have seen improvements in various physical fitness components, including cardiorespiratory endurance, body composition, muscle flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance, which help delay aging.

Sports practices embedded within the landscape of Indian higher education offer a unique avenue for students to prioritize physical activity and holistic well-being. In a nation where academic excellence often takes precedence, the integration of sports practices within higher education institutions provides a comprehensive approach to student development.

The inception of the 'Fit India Movement' launched by our hon'ble Prime Minister on August 29, 2019, heralded a significant stride in promoting health-centric physical fitness awareness nationwide. The COVID-19 lockdowns during 2020 and 2021 underscored the critical importance of maintaining basic fitness standards, with several fatalities recorded among individuals lacking adequate fitness levels. In response, the Ministry of Youth Affairs

and Sports, alongside the Sports Authority of India, rolled out numerous programs aligned with the Fit India Movement. Moreover, the University Grants Commission strongly advocated the initiation of physical fitness programs across higher education institutions to alleviate academic stress among students and the general public.

It is a matter of pride that ALU had started this fitness movement much earlier. Typically scheduled in the early morning and late afternoon to accommodate academic commitments, ASSURE entails a spectrum of physical activities, from exercises and drills to team sports, aiming to elevate fitness levels, refine motor skills, and foster camaraderie among peers.

### **Physical Training Sessions to foster Government employment opportunities for Aspiring Students**

Alagappa University is dedicated to enhancing public health and fostering the personal and professional growth of its students annually. One of its primary initiatives involves offering physical fitness practices aimed at promoting health and creating job opportunities in various fields such as the ARMY, TNUSRB (SI, Police), RPF, and SSC (GD Constable). These practices are meticulously designed to prepare individuals for the physical demands of these professions. Under the guidance of Physical Education faculty members of Alagappa University College of Physical Education, students are trained in a range of best practices including Warm Up, Agility drills, Stretching Exercises, Rope climbing training, Medicine ball training, Speed training, Running Drills, Pull-ups, Push-Ups, Steps Workout, Box Jumping, Hurdles Jumps, and Cone Drills. These activities are conducted in the University grounds to ensure a conducive environment for physical training. By providing such comprehensive physical fitness training, Alagappa University aims to equip its students with necessary skills and stamina to excel in their chosen career paths. These initiatives not only improve health and well-being but also create avenues for professional growth and success.

### **Evidence of Success**

The ASSURE program aims to develop the basic physical fitness of participants. However, if anyone demonstrates a strong dominance in sports-related physical fitness components such as speed, power, agility, coordination, balance, and reaction time, they receive special attention and focus on competitive sports. Around 50 participants attend the physical training everyday with greater zeal and enthusiasm. In line with this, participants in ASSURE are assured of climbing up higher in the sports ladder and have competed in school

zonal level competitions, State level competitions conducted by the School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, events affiliated with the Tamil Nadu Athletic Association, and All India South Zone inter-university tournaments conducted by the All India Inter-University Sports Board in New Delhi, All India Inter University south zone women football tournament, All India Inter University south zone women Kho Kho tournament, All India Inter University south zone women handball tournament and All India Inter University athletic competitions and they have won many laurels.

Participants in ASSURE feel empowered by the program, **“gaining the confidence to pursue excellence not only within Alagappa University/State/Nation but also to set their sights on the Olympic podium”**.

### **Problems encountered and resources required**

Moreover, socio-economic factors can act as constraints, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds facing barriers such as lack of access to proper nutrition, transportation, and financial resources for sports-related expenses. Furthermore, societal attitudes towards sports and physical education may prioritize academic achievement over athletic pursuits, leading to lack of institutional support and recognition for sports programs in higher education institutions. Although sports practice in Indian higher education offers numerous benefits and opportunities for student development, it is essential to address these constraints and limitations to ensure effective implementation and accessibility for all students. By investing in sports infrastructure, providing adequate resources, and fostering a culture of sportsmanship and inclusivity, higher education institutions can create an environment where students can thrive academically, physically, and socially.