

Physical Education under India's National Education Policy 2020: Scope, Challenges, and Prospects for Holistic Development

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 17th January 2026 Accepted: 22nd January 2026 Published: 02nd February 2026</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Curriculum, Development, Physical education, national education policy, framework.</i></p>	<p>India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes comprehensive, inclusive, and transdisciplinary learning in an effort to revolutionize the nation's educational system. This paradigm acknowledges physical education (PE) as an essential part of students' overall growth. The combination of yoga, meditation, athletics, and leisure activities is emphasized in the policy as crucial components of health and fitness. In order to improve physical education, it also pushes educational institutions to upgrade their sports facilities, hire teachers with professional training, and implement technology-enabled fitness solutions. Despite its progressive outlook, there are a number of obstacles to NEP 2020's successful implementation in the field of physical education. These include poor facilities, a lack of trained teachers, differences between schools, and societal attitudes that frequently place more emphasis on academic success than physical activity.</p> <p>In addition, it is still difficult to standardize PE programs across various school contexts. The policy suggests systematic teacher training programs, mandatory physical education periods, increased community and government involvement, and the use of digital technologies to increase accessibility and student engagement as ways to overcome these obstacles.</p> <p>By creating a well-rounded and student-centered instructional approach, NEP 2020 has the potential to completely transform physical education in India. The strategy can promote lifetime fitness habits and help create a generation that is healthier and more physically active with coordinated implementation and cooperative efforts among stakeholders. In order to demonstrate its revolutionary potential and its role in promoting the holistic development of India's future generations, this article examines the physical education framework of NEP 2020.</p> <p>Focused attention on socioeconomic justice, infrastructural development, teacher capacity building, and significant technology integration are necessary to achieve the policy's goals. In the end, physical education has the potential to become a way of life in India, improving students' mental, emotional, and physical health.</p>

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Introduction:

By guaranteeing universal access to high-quality education, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to reposition India as a sustainable, egalitarian, and vibrant knowledge-based society. The strategy presents extensive changes at all educational levels and is based on the fundamental ideas of access, fairness, quality, affordability, and accountability. According to this paradigm, physical education is acknowledged as a fundamental discipline with the goal of fostering students' discipline, character development, physical well-being, and vital life skills.

The policy includes important reforms in higher education, such as the introduction of interdisciplinary and diversified academic programs, more institutional autonomy, and the integration of technology, and it predicts the creation of a young population that is healthier and more physically active. In India's educational system, physical education has historically received less attention than intellectual topics like science, math, and languages, which are typically given priority. By promoting a holistic learning approach that incorporates athletics, yoga, and fitness-oriented activities to foster lifelong health and wellness practices among students, NEP 2020 aims to go beyond traditional educational paradigms. Curricular flexibility is a key component of the strategy, which strives to give kids from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and skill levels fair access to physical education. Regardless of athletic ability, educational institutions are urged to provide inclusive settings where all students may participate in physical exercise. The strategy strongly emphasizes teacher training, professional development, and the building of suitable sports infrastructure across schools worldwide in order to promote the efficient delivery of physical education. The implementation of physical education under NEP 2020 faces numerous obstacles despite its progressive vision, such as inadequate infrastructure, a lack of trained physical education professionals, and societal attitudes that prioritize academic success over physical activity. To guarantee that the goals of the policy are converted into effective practice, politicians, educators, institutional leaders, and community stakeholders must work together in concert to address these issues.

Objective of Research:

1. To assess and identify the crucial modifications suggested by the NEP within the confines of the conventional, exam-focused teaching methodology.
2. To determine how the suggested physical education program could affect students' general well-being.
3. To evaluate the data and research that are currently available about the relationship between physical activity and academic achievement.
4. To ascertain the reasoning for the NEP's heightened focus on physical education.
5. To support the implementation of a thorough assessment of the potential and breadth of the Physical Education Curriculum in compliance with India's National Education Policy (NEP).

Literature Review:

1. **Bansal, N., and Verma, A. (2019).** "Policy Shifts in Indian Education: An Analysis of the National Education Policy." This policy analysis research provides a comprehensive overview of the benefits and difficulties of changing the physical education curriculum in the Indian school system.
2. **Mukhopadhyay, S., and Bepari, K. (2021)** "Nep 2020: A Game Changer For Physical Education and Sports" emphasizes that retraining education leaders should be the primary emphasis because changes are challenging due to the influence of professors.

- Gupta & Arora, 2021 By introducing physical education as an essential part of comprehensive education, the NEP 2020 aims to follow suit. To make this vision a reality, however, significant expenditures in infrastructure, teacher preparation, and policy enforcement are needed.
- 3. **Bhonsale, S. (2023).** "The Future and Scope of the Physical Education Curriculum in the National Education Policy" The study assesses the National Education Policy's Physical Education curriculum and projects how it will impact students' cognitive, social, and emotional well-being using best practices and empirical data.
- 4. **Singh, S., and Kumar, R. (2022).** "Technology Integration in Physical Education: A Comprehensive Review." This review looks at technology's role in experiential learning. In line with the NEP's focus on improving the teaching and learning process via the use of contemporary resources, it looks at how technology may improve education.

Research Methodology:

In order to investigate the extent, importance, and ramifications of physical education within the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, secondary sources of data were methodically examined. To guarantee a thorough and impartial grasp of the topic, a variety of research sources were reviewed. Standard reference books, academic textbooks, peer-reviewed research articles, national and international magazines, policy documents, government reports, newspapers, and reliable internet platforms are some examples of these sources. Additionally, conversations, professional talks, and instructional videos on YouTube and other internet learning portals were used to obtain up-to-date knowledge and useful viewpoints. Key topics, trends, obstacles, and possibilities pertaining to physical education reforms in India were identified through a critical analysis and synthesis of the gathered data. A comprehensive assessment of current literature and policy frameworks pertinent to physical education and educational development is made possible by the study's reliance on a variety of reputable secondary sources, which also guarantees dependability, depth, and academic rigor.

The Indian National Education Policy (NEP) Outlines The Future And Scope Of The Physical Education Curriculum:

- The Future Formation of the Physical Education Curriculum and the National Education Policy (NEP)
- NEP 2020 envisions an education system whose influence extends beyond classrooms, nurturing a generation equipped with adaptability, resilience, and skills required to address future challenges and opportunities
- The physical education curriculum proposed under NEP 2020 represents a significant departure from traditional education models, aligning with the principles of inclusivity, technological integration, holistic development, and recognition of the close relationship between physical activity and cognitive health.
- In order to improve educational results, the policy views physical education as a multimodal learning environment that promotes cognitive, physical, and socioemotional development. It does this by integrating digital platforms, virtual simulations, and interactive learning technology.

- To overcome obstacles relating to infrastructural constraints, teacher readiness, and social attitudes, the new physical education curriculum must be implemented successfully via teamwork, creative teaching methods, and robust community involvement.
- By supporting a wide variety of physical activities that accommodate students' different interests, skills, and needs, the policy fosters equity and equips students to participate in a varied society.
- Overall, by highlighting technology-enabled learning, holistic development, and the interdependence of physical and mental well-being, the NEP-envisioned physical education curriculum represents a revolutionary shift in education.
- Physical education is anticipated to be crucial in developing well-rounded people with the adaptability and resilience required for success throughout their lives as India moves further on this reformative route.

Indian Physical Education: A Historical Perspective

Before British Colonial Rule:

- Through games, sports, leisure, and work-related activities, physical education was ingrained in everyday life during the Indus Valley Civilization.
- During the Vedic era, physical and spiritual conditioning techniques like Suryanamaskara were popular.
- Early Indian societies engaged in hunting, wrestling, chess, dice games, animal contests, and water-based sports as recreational activities.
- During the middle Ages, gurukulas and akhadas (gymnasiums) were crucial in encouraging physical training, with reformers like Samarth Ramdas Swami institutionalizing practices like Suryanamaskara.

During British Colonial Rule

- Around 1870, the British government formally established physical education in India, and it steadily gained significance in educational planning.
- Organized sports including hockey, football, kabaddi, and kho-kho gained popularity in India by 1903.
- Despite difficulties caused by a teacher shortage, physical education was implemented in government schools in 1920.
- An important turning point in the growth of organized sports was the founding of major sports organizations in 1923, such as the Indian Olympic Committee, Amateur Athletic Federation of India, and Hockey Federation of India.

After Independence: Development of Physical Education in India:

- India's physical education system was assessed in 1946 using international standards, but many goals were still unfulfilled.
- Physical education colleges were established in several states as a result of the Tara Chand Committee's founding in 1948.
- In 1953, coaching programs were started, and in 1954, a Curriculum Advisory Board was established.

- The institutional foundation for physical education was reinforced by the establishment of the Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education (LNIPE) in 1956 and the University Grants Commission's (UGC) 1958 policy recommendations.

Key Elements of the Physical Education Curriculum under NEP 2020

- By combining indigenous sports and traditional physical activities, the NEP physical education curriculum fosters cultural awareness and strengthens students' relationships to their local history.
- Digital tools, interactive games, fitness monitors, and virtual reality-based learning opportunities are used to highlight technological integration.
- NEP's dedication to an open, innovative, and interdisciplinary educational framework that aims to promote both mental and physical competence is reflected in the curriculum.
- By emphasizing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical growth through movement-based learning, mindfulness exercises, and training in critical life skills, NEP redefines physical education.
- To improve motor skills, sensory coordination, and spatial awareness—all essential for long-term engagement in physical activities—foundational education is given top priority.
- By supporting a variety of learning styles, providing exploratory activities, promoting learner autonomy, and encouraging lifetime involvement with physical fitness, the curriculum offers flexibility and choice.

Physical education's future and scope under NEP 2020:

- In order for the PE curriculum to be implemented effectively, improvements in assessment techniques, infrastructure development, teacher preparation, and the encouragement of active lifestyles within educational institutions are necessary.
- The NEP promotes a shift beyond traditional PE classrooms by fostering a school-wide culture of physical activity through interdisciplinary collaboration, parental involvement, and community participation.
- The policy stresses the availability of sufficient infrastructure and resources, such as well-equipped sports facilities, a variety of equipment, and technology-enabled learning environments; it also prioritizes the ongoing professional development of physical education teachers to guarantee familiarity with contemporary pedagogical approaches, emerging technologies, and holistic instructional strategies.
- NEP 2020 seeks to reform evaluation practices in physical education by introducing comprehensive assessment tools that measure physical performance alongside cognitive development and socio-emotional learning.

Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing the Physical Education Curriculum under NEP 2020

- Schools, parents, media outlets, and community leaders must work together in concert to change how society views physical education. The perceived value of physical education may be greatly increased by parental participation, the sharing of success stories, and awareness campaigns emphasizing long-term health and educational advantages.
- NEP 2020 recognizes a number of implementation obstacles, such as resistance stemming from established academic priorities, concerns about the allocation of instructional time to physical

education, and maintaining an adequate balance between academic rigor and physical exercise. Adopting cross-curricular learning strategies—where physical education enhances academic topics without sacrificing essential learning outcomes— is another significant difficulty.

Recommendations for Effective Implementation of the Physical Education Curriculum under NEP 2020

- One of the most important facilitators of contemporary physical education is the incorporation of technology. While maintaining the fundamentals of movement, tools like virtual reality simulations, fitness programs, and online learning platforms can enhance conventional physical activities. Teachers should get sufficient training to guarantee the safe, efficient, and significant use of technology in physical education lessons.
- To ensure fair participation and individualized learning experiences, inclusive educational techniques should be used to suit students' varied abilities, interests, and skill levels.
- To determine the efficacy of physical education programs and to support evidence-based advancements throughout time, comprehensive assessment and ongoing monitoring are crucial.
- Promoting the value of physical education for kids' overall development may be greatly aided by public awareness campaigns including media organizations, academic institutions, and well-known individuals.
- NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on enhancing physical education through organized teacher preparation programs, modern pedagogical approaches, and successful sports management techniques. In addition to seeking targeted financing for infrastructure improvement, especially in economically challenged regions, schools should emphasize the construction and upkeep of playgrounds and sports facilities.
- Deeper and more significant educational experiences can result from integrating physical education with academic learning. The advantages of integrating classroom education with physical exercise are illustrated through empirical case studies.
- For implementation to be effective, community involvement is essential. Collaborations with neighborhood gyms, sports teams, civic associations, and leisure facilities can offer more resources, knowledge, and chances for student involvement.

Conclusion:

India has a long and illustrious history of physical education that dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization. It was first established in 1870 during the British era. By taking a more comprehensive approach to student development, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a substantial chance to restore physical education as a key element of the Indian educational system. Through a multimodal learning framework that fosters cognitive, socioemotional, and physical development, the strategy aims to equip future generations with critical skills, flexibility, and resilience. Additionally, it promotes the use of technology to improve learning outcomes and cognitive functioning, such as interactive platforms and virtual simulations.

Physical education has the potential to become a pillar of India's educational system despite current obstacles if policies are implemented effectively, infrastructure is developed, and societal attitudes are positively altered. India can raise a generation that is healthier, more active, and well-rounded by giving equal weight to academic achievement and physical health. Innovative assessment techniques, sufficient facilities,

ongoing professional development for teachers, and the creation of a robust physical activity culture in schools are all necessary for the physical education curriculum's future success. Furthermore, providing all students with a thorough and fulfilling physical education experience requires ongoing cooperation between educational institutions, local communities, and governmental organizations.

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