**THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020 IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND YOGA ACROSS INDIAN EDUCATIONAL LEVELS**

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**Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a huge and dramatic movement in India's educational environment, going beyond traditional academic emphasis and toward holistic development. This strategy is unique in that it incorporates physical education, sports, and yoga into the core curriculum at all levels, from primary school to higher education in colleges and universities. Historically, these fields were frequently assigned to extracurricular activities. The NEP 2020 strives to develop well-rounded persons by promoting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as essential life skills including discipline, teamwork, and stress management. While the policy has numerous potential benefits, such as increased participation, improved health outcomes, and improved talent identification, its successful implementation will face challenges in resource allocation, cultural mindsets, and ensuring equitable access and support for sports students. This research article explores the key provisions of NEP 2020 concerning physical education, sports, and yoga, analyses their intended benefits, and discusses the ongoing implementation challenges across India's diverse educational ecosystem.

**Keywords**

**NEP 2020**, **Physical Education in India**, **Yoga Integration in Education**, **Holistic Student Development**, **Sports Policy Implementation**, **Educational Reform India**, **Skill Development through Sports.**

**Introduction**

Historically, intellectual disciplines have received more attention in Indian education than physical activities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, announced by the Government of India, deviates from this trend by calling for the inclusion of sports and physical activity as an integral component of the curriculum. This policy envisions a comprehensive, adaptive, and inclusive education system that meets the diverse needs of children and prepares them for the modern day. As Swami Vivekananda stated, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already existing in man," and the NEP 2020 aims to achieve this by incorporating physical education, sports, and yoga to promote overall personality development as well as health and wellness in all aspects of an individual's life (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020; Narayanan et al., 2025.).

The NEP 2020 recognizes the value of sports in students' entire development and urges educational institutions to provide suitable facilities for sports instruction. It aims to break down the barriers between academic and extracurricular activities, increasing student participation and enjoyment. The Indian government has created efforts including the Fit India Movement, Khelo India, TOPS, National Sports Day, and International Day of Yoga to promote physical fitness, mental health, and holistic development for all citizens (Kumar, 2023; Bisht et al., 2023; Baviskar, 2023). This article delves into the specific provisions of NEP 2020 for physical education, sports, and yoga at all educational levels, examines the expected benefits, and identifies the challenges in its effective implementation.

**NEP 2020: Key Provisions for Physical Education, Sports, and Yoga**

The NEP 2020 introduces several key measures to enhance the status and quality of physical education, sports, and yoga across the educational spectrum:

* **Holistic Education Approach:** The policy encourages a well-rounded education that combines academics with physical and artistic activities. It expressly emphasizes the importance of sports in students' total development, with the goal of promoting holistic growth that includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Yoga, as part of this comprehensive approach, helps students develop inner peace, self-control, and mindfulness (Narayanan et al., 2025; Sonu Rani & Bhalla, 2021).
* **Curricular Integration:** All educational levels should incorporate physical education (PE) into their curricula to guarantee that pupils engage in regular physical exercise. Considering athletics as more than just an extracurricular activity is a big change. In order to guarantee consistent involvement, the policy requires physical education to be a core subject with specific times in the school calendar. The terms "curricular," "extracurricular," and "co-curricular" activities, as well as "arts," "humanities," "sciences," "vocational," and "academic" streams, should not be strictly distinguished from one another. As a cross-curricular educational method, sports-integrated learning uses physical activities, especially indigenous sports, to foster the development of skills like citizenship, responsibility, teamwork, self-discipline, self-initiative, and cooperation. From elementary school through university, yoga will also be taught in schools. It is advised that yoga be taught early on to encourage the formation of good habits (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020; Pandey, 2024).
* **Infrastructure Development:** In order to facilitate a variety of physical activities, schools are urged to have sufficient sports facilities. To provide a supportive atmosphere for athletes, schools and universities are spending more money on sports facilities including well-equipped gyms, sports fields, tracks, swimming pools, and indoor sports facilities. To guarantee adherence to national standards, school physical education programs should undergo routine audits and inspections (Baviskar, 2023; Bisht et al., 2023).
* **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** In order to guarantee high-quality instruction, the policy highlights the necessity of specialized training programs for physical education instructors. In order to develop athletic potential, mentor students, and use efficient training techniques, qualified coaches and trainers are essential. Teachers will get training to ensure they have the abilities and information needed to properly teach yoga. Through training programs, orientations, refreshers, seminars, and short-term courses, physical education faculty are encouraged to increase their expertise. Additionally, as part of NEP 2020, the CBSE is hosting workshops to build capacity and provide orientation to principals and teachers on how to implement physical education, art education, and vocational education (CBSE, 2025; Narayanan et al., 2025).
* **Assessment and Evaluation:** To guarantee that physical education is given the weight it deserves, it must be included into the whole assessment system. In order to assist children, cultivate a love of sports without excessive pressure, the NEP suggests a move away from high-stakes tests and toward formative assessment, which emphasizes ongoing feedback and progress. This covers physical education evaluation and grading (Baviskar, 2023).
* **Emphasis on Indigenous Sports:** NEP 2020's focus on indigenous sports is one of its most notable features. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 includes a promotion of traditional games including Mallakhamb, Kho Kho, and Kabaddi. In addition to improving mental and physical health, these activities help people feel more connected to their Indian heritage (Sonu Rani & Bhalla, 2021; Kumar, 2023).
* **Focus on Early Childhood Physical Education:** To encourage healthy behaviors from an early age, the policy offers pre-primary and primary pupils age-appropriate physical education programs. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (2020) and Pandey (2024) highlight the need of play-based learning strategies for young children to improve their motor abilities, coordination, and social interaction.
* **Community and Parental Involvement:** In order to emphasize the value of physical education and motivate parents to participate in their children's physical activities, NEP 2020 encourages parents to get involved through workshops and seminars. In order to foster a culture of health, it also recommends starting community-based physical activity programs that include residents, parents, and students. In order to promote yoga practices outside of the classroom, yoga education will also incorporate community participation (Nyden, 2003; Narayanan et al., 2025).
* **Special Initiatives for Underprivileged and Marginalised Groups:** In order to provide fair access to sports and physical activities, the policy specifies creating specialized physical education programs for children from disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Additionally, it contains clauses that assist, encourage, and provide scholarships for gifted children from underprivileged backgrounds to pursue higher education in sports (Baviskar, 2023; Kumar, 2023).
* **Research and Development:** NEP 2020 promotes providing grants and financing for physical education research in order to create novel approaches and comprehend how PE affects student results. Additionally, it promotes collaborations with academic institutions to create physical education policies and practices that are supported by research. Research and innovation into yoga education are also encouraged in order to examine its uses and advantages (Pandey, 2024).
* **Skill Development:** The policy emphasizes modernizing and broadening the educational environment in order to better prepare students for an ever-changing employment market. It seeks to promote holistic development, close the education-employment gap, boost entrepreneurship, and build global competitiveness and flexibility to technology advances. This includes the development of a wide range of skills, including hard skills, soft skills, transferable skills, job-specific skills, personal development skills, entrepreneurial skills, emotional intelligence, digital innovation, multi-language skills, social skills, financial literacy, and cultural competency. The policy also emphasizes 21st-century competencies including global awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-direction, communication, and cooperation. Vertical and horizontal skill mapping are critical for strategic workforce planning and overall talent development (Govindharaj, 2024).
* **Yoga Integration Details:** Yoga is acknowledged as a vital component of the educational system, supporting students' mental and physical health and aiding in their overall development, which includes their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical maturation (Narayanan et al., 2025; Raja Lakhamagouda Science Institute, 2021–22 onwards). Important facets of yoga instruction include:
* **Asanas (postures):** Teaching various yoga poses, and alignment principles.
* **Pranayama (breathing techniques):** Educating students on conscious breathing practices to regularise mind activity and promote calmness.
* **Yoga Philosophy:** Exploring the history, ethics, and spiritual foundations of yoga as a way to learn Indian traditional knowledge systems.
* **Meditation and Mindfulness:** Guiding students in mindfulness practices and meditation techniques to reduce stress, enhance focus, and build emotional resilience.
* **Anatomy and Physiology:** Understanding the human body and how yoga affects it, including muscle engagement and injury prevention.
* **Teaching Methodology:** Training instructors on effective teaching techniques, advocating for more teaching aids for the current generation.
* **Specialised Yoga:** Focusing on specific styles like Hatha, Vinyasa, Restorative, or Yin yoga.
* **Yoga for Special Populations:** Adapting yoga for diverse needs, such as prenatal, children, or seniors, connecting with individuals based on their needs.
* **Business and Marketing:** Preparing instructors for the professional aspects of teaching yoga, including start-up knowledge.
* **Continuing Education:** Encouraging ongoing learning and professional development, adding value to humanity through need-based teaching.

Yoga education can be offered in various settings, including yoga studios, schools, universities, community centres, online platforms, teacher training programmes, workshops, and retreats. The inclusion of yoga in higher education means it will be offered as an elective or credit course in universities and colleges.

**Benefits of Integrating Physical Education, Sports, and Yoga**

The comprehensive integration of physical education, sports, and yoga into the curriculum under NEP 2020 is expected to yield a wide array of benefits for students:

* **Physical Health:** Regular physical exercise improves physical health, lowers the risk of chronic illnesses, and increases total fitness. Participation in sports promotes physical fitness and health benefits. Yoga practices considerably improve physical well-being, vitality, and toxin removal (Narayanan et al., 2025; Kumar, 2023).
* **Mental Health:** Physical education and yoga promote mental health by lowering stress, anxiety, and depression and improving cognitive function. Yoga teaches students how to successfully manage stress, keep a healthy and tranquil mind, and promotes emotional balance and resilience, all of which are essential in a learner-centric paradigm (Narayanan et al., 2025).
* **Social Skills:** Team sports and group activities promote important social qualities including teamwork, leadership, and cooperation. Participation in sports improves students' self-esteem, social skills, and confidence, allowing them to integrate into society and contribute to national growth.
* **Academic Performance:** Physical activity has been demonstrated in studies to increase focus, memory, and classroom behavior, all of which contribute to improved grades. Yoga approaches can help students focus better in class, resulting in academic achievement (Bisht et al., 2023; Pandey, 2024).
* **Overall Personality Development:** Sports and education are two important components of a student's growth, and NEP 2020 includes physical education, sports, and yoga to promote total personality development. Sports education improves personality and teaches numerous important skills. Yoga promotes students' overall development, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth, resulting in well-rounded, resilient, and self-aware persons (Narayanan et al., 2025; Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).
* **Entrepreneurship and Employability:** The curriculum seeks to prepare students to be entrepreneurs, capable of opening their own fitness centers or gyms and developing appropriate exercise programs for a variety of age groups. It also allows them to officiate, supervise, and plan a variety of sporting activities. The policy focuses on developing specialists in physical education, sports, and yoga through higher education institutions, therefore assisting every Indian person to be healthy, fit, and well. Yoga vocational courses, including as teaching and treatment, provide students the opportunity to seek careers in the wellness business. Yoga offers several job prospects, including teaching, training, coaching, wellness, therapy, sports contests, digital services, research, tourism, marketing, startups, and studio management (Kumar, 2023; Narayanan et al., 2025; Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University, 2021-22 onwards).

**Challenges in Implementation**

Despite the promising framework, the implementation of NEP 2020 regarding physical education, sports, and yoga faces several significant challenges:

* **Resource Allocation and Infrastructure:** Many schools, particularly in rural regions, lack the funds to provide suitable sports facilities and recruit trained physical education teachers. While the NEP emphasizes the significance of facilities, establishing enough sports infrastructure and resources remains a difficulty. Ensuring equal access to quality sports facilities and programs for all pupils is especially challenging in rural and poor communities (Baviskar, 2023; Pandey, 2024).
* **Cultural Attitudes and Mindset:** There is an ongoing need to change cultural attitudes that have historically prioritised academic accomplishment above physical education. Many schools continue to prioritize academics, limiting children' exposure to the full advantages of sports. Moving from a typical exam-focused strategy to a holistic development approach necessitates a considerable shift in thinking among educators, parents, and students. Many people still believe that the policy's goal of holistic development is to mandate physical activity while ignoring its deeper experiential features in developing adolescent minds and bodies (Kumar, 2023; Narayanan et al., 2025).
* **Training and Development of Personnel:** Providing appropriate training for physical education teachers and guaranteeing the availability of skilled coaches is still a significant concern. While the policy emphasizes the significance of quality sports coaching, the availability of qualified specialists and adequate training facilities is frequently inadequate (CBSE, 2025).
* **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing strong systems to monitor and assess the execution of physical education programmes is critical to their success (Pandey, 2024).
* **Limited Flexibility in Academic Curriculum for Sports Students:** Despite the policy's emphasis on multimodal learning, inflexible academic institutions sometimes make it difficult for sports students to integrate intense training schedules with academic obligations. This might cause increased stress, unfinished tasks, and difficulty keeping up with schoolwork (Baviskar, 2023; Sonu Rani & Bhalla, 2021).
* **Missed Classroom Instruction:** Sports students sometimes miss normal classroom instruction due to athletic activities, tournaments, or training camps, resulting in knowledge gaps and impeded comprehension of new topics. This can result in a loss of valuable learning experiences and impede academic advancement (Bisht et al., 2023; Baviskar, 2023).
* **Travel and Fatigue:** Sports students who travel extensively for competitions and tournaments may experience physical and mental exhaustion, which can impair their ability to focus and perform academically. This exhaustion can lead to a reduction in alertness, a decline in cognitive function, and trouble remembering information (Baviskar, 2023).
* **Limited Academic Support:** Sports students typically confront a lack of specialist academic assistance tailored to their specific requirements, making it difficult to balance their academic burden with intensive training schedules (Kumar, 2023).
* **Disparity in Sports Engagement:** There is still a difference in sports participation between schools in spite of the robust system. This prevents pupils from experiencing the full advantages of physical activity and sports (Pandey, 2024).

**Conclusion**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a good chance to improve the position of physical education, sports, and yoga in India. By changing preconceptions and including these fields into the core curriculum, the policy helps students become well-rounded, responsible citizens. It goes beyond simply enforcing physical exercise to promoting fitness as a lifetime attitude and building important life skills through sports-integrated education. Yoga's emphasis on ancient practices, mental well-being, and holistic development opens up new learning opportunities while also contributing to a healthier, more balanced, and conscientious society.

The diverse approach of NEP 2020 indicates a commitment to renewing these critical components of education, ranging from curriculum revisions and digital integration to early childhood programs and community participation. However, achieving the full potential of this program requires enormous investment in infrastructure, good teacher training, and a fundamental shift in thinking among educators, parents, and kids. Addressing concerns of equal access, particularly in rural and underserved regions, and providing personalized assistance for sports students are essential. India can bridge the gap between sports and education by collaborating with educational institutions, sports organizations, and policymakers, as well as monitoring and adapting continuously. This will foster both athletic and academic excellence, ultimately empowering future generations to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

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