

NEP 2020: Transforming Physical Education and Sports in India

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Abstract: *The newly introduced National Education Policy (NEP) is a timely and welcome reform, particularly in light of the pandemic's impact on children's health, happiness, and immunity. This policy incorporates several key provisions that are crucial for fostering holistic development in children. By dismantling the rigid distinction between curricular and extracurricular activities, the NEP rightfully acknowledges the equal importance of sports alongside traditional subjects like English and Science. This integration is expected to enhance engagement and enjoyment for students, who are eager for a more interactive school experience. Through play, children can develop physically, cognitively, and socially. Research has also shown that play positively influences academic outcomes, classroom behavior, and attendance rates. Furthermore, the policy's emphasis on assessment reforms, such as the establishment of the National Assessment Centre and tracking student progress based on learning outcomes, is a significant step forward. These reforms focus on monitoring learning progress, thereby promoting the all - round development of children. We anticipate that sports and play will be delivered and assessed with the same rigor and structure as core academic subjects, ensuring that all children experience the benefits of play and sports. This, in turn, will contribute to the development of a healthier and fitter generation of children through the school system. The policy's emphasis on vocational education is also a noteworthy step towards promoting holistic development in children. We hope that students will have the opportunity to choose physical activity and sports as a vocational subject. We look forward to the successful implementation of this policy, which will hopefully translate into a more engaging, enjoyable, and interactive school environment for children, while also meeting the desired learning outcomes. This research article provides a critical analysis of the NEP 2020, exploring its various provisions and comparing them to existing frameworks in developed countries, with a specific focus on physical education and sports.*

Keywords: NEP 2020, Holistic Education, Physical Education and Sports

1. Introduction

The Importance of Physical Education in Modern Times

The term "education" originates from the Latin word "Educatum," meaning "to bring out." In this sense, education aims to foster the best qualities in individuals. Education is a process that facilitates learning, knowledge acquisition, skill development, and the formation of values, morals, and habits.

According to Swami Vivekananda, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." Physical inactivity is a significant determinant of health across all age groups, increasing the risk of various diseases, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, anxiety, and depression.

The prevalence and health impact of physical inactivity have been described as a pandemic. To address this issue, the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment was established. The committee aimed to review the current status of physical activity and physical education in schools and examine their influence on the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial health and development of children and adolescents.

India, with its rich cultural diversity, has a unique opportunity to integrate physical education into its education system. This can be achieved by incorporating traditional arts, music, and sports into the curriculum, promoting creativity, originality, and innovation among students.

As Einstein once said, "The wonderful things you learn in your schools are the work of many generations. All this is put into your hands as your inheritance in order that you may receive it, honor it, add to it, and one day faithfully hand it on to your children."

Throughout history, physical activity has been essential for human survival. However, with modernization and technological advancements, physical activity levels have decreased, leading to an increase in hypokinetic diseases. The current pandemic situation highlights the importance of physical activity, especially for school - going children.

Physical education is the essence of physical activity, and it plays a crucial role in developing immunity in children. Therefore, physical education should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum. Physical education is a formal content area of study that encompasses assessment - based standards and benchmarks.

A well - structured physical education program can develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors essential for healthy living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self - efficacy, and emotional intelligence. As a school subject, physical education focuses on teaching children the science and methods of physically active, healthful living.

By emphasizing physical education in schools, we can promote good health, fitness, and disease prevention among children, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more active society.

Physical education is a vital component of a child's overall development, and India's new education system recognizes its

importance. The vision is to create a system that promotes holistic development, including physical fitness, gross motor skills, and health, while aligning with the country's traditions and value systems¹.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the right to education, and India's education policy aims to provide free and compulsory elementary education. A well-structured physical education program can develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors essential for healthy living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence.

Key Aspects of Physical Education in India's New Education System:

- Developmentally Appropriate Physical Activities: Designed for children to develop their fitness, gross motor skills, and health.
- Alignment with 21st - Century Education: Focuses on creating a system that promotes holistic development, including physical fitness, gross motor skills, and health.
- Consistency with India's Traditions and Value Systems: Ensures that the education system remains rooted in Indian culture and values.

Importance of Physical Education:

- Physical Growth and Healthy Fitness: Develops strong muscles and bones, promotes physical growth, and enhances overall health.
- Mental Development: Helps ensure good mental health, reduces stress levels, and promotes emotional stability.
- Social Development: Fosters social skills, teamwork, and communication, essential for overall development.

By emphasizing physical education, India's new education system aims to create a healthier, more active, and well-rounded generation of citizens.

NASPE's Characteristics of a High - Quality Physical Education Program Opportunity to learn • All students are required to take physical education.

- Instructional periods total 150 minutes per week (elementary schools) and 225 minutes per week (middle and secondary schools).
- Physical education class size is consistent with that of other subject areas.
- A qualified physical education specialist provides a developmentally appropriate program.
- Equipment and facilities are adequate and safe. Meaningful content
- A written, sequential curriculum for grades PreK - 12 is based on state and/or national standards for physical education.
- Instruction in a variety of motor skills is designed to enhance the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of every child.
- Fitness education and assessment are designed to help children understand, improve, and/or maintain physical well-being.
- Curriculum fosters the development of cognitive concepts about motor skill and fitness.

- Opportunities are provided to improve emerging social and cooperative skills and gain a multicultural perspective.
- Curriculum promotes regular amounts of appropriate physical activity now and throughout life. Appropriate instruction
- Full inclusion of all students.
- Maximum practice opportunities for class activities.
- Well - designed lessons that facilitate student learning.
- Out - of - school assignments that support learning and practice.
- Physical activity not assigned or withheld as punishment.
- Regular assessment to monitor and reinforce student learning. Student and program assessment
- Assessment is an ongoing, vital part of the physical education program.
- Formative and summative assessments of student progress are conducted.
- Student assessments are aligned with state/national physical education standards and the written physical education curriculum.
- Assessment of program elements that support quality physical education is conducted.
- Stakeholders periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the total physical education program. SOURCE: Adapted from NASPE, 2009c

Background of NEP 2020

Since India's independence, the focus has primarily been on increasing access and equity in education, while quality has taken a backseat. The implementation of previous education policies remains incomplete. The National Policy on Education 1986, modified in 1992 (NPE 1986/92), laid the groundwork for achieving universal elementary education. However, significant developments have occurred since then, making it essential to formulate a new policy.

Key Developments

The Constitution (Eighty - sixth Amendment) Act, 2002, inserted Article 21 - A, emphasizing the importance of universal elementary education. The rapid growth of technology has transformed the education landscape, requiring policymakers to adapt and innovate.

Education Policy in Developed Countries

In contrast, developed countries like the United States have a decentralized education system, with primary responsibility resting with parents, local, and state governments. The federal government plays a limited role, contributing less than 13% of total education expenditures.

The Need for Reform

The current demographic dividend presents a unique opportunity for India to equip its children and youth with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to drive social, economic, and political transformation. The NEP 2020 aims to address these challenges and create a more inclusive, equitable, and quality - focused education system.

Key Objectives

- 1) Universal Access: Ensuring universal access to quality education.

- 2) Equity and Inclusion: Promoting equity and inclusion in education.
- 3) Quality and Accountability: Focusing on quality and accountability in education.
- 4) Teacher Training: Enhancing teacher training and capacity building.
- 5) Technology Integration: Leveraging technology to improve education outcomes.

The goals of educational policy have evolved in the United States as society and culture have changed, and are continually being debated and revised. Over time, the following have all been goals of public education:

- To prepare children for citizenship
- To cultivate a skilled workforce
- To teach cultural literacy
- To prepare students for college
- To help students become critical thinkers
- To help students compete in a global marketplace secondary schools

The reforms of the early 20th century focused mainly on expanding secondary schools, and has been called by some the "high school movement" or second transformation of American education. It concentrated on increasing graduation rates by diversifying the academic programs to include not only traditional foundational subjects, but also vocational training. In 1917 the Smith - Hughes Act and the 1946 George - Barden Act focused federal involvement on agricultural, industrial and home economics training for high school students. Educational "administrative progressives" did succeed in changing the face of public education based on the new "educational science." They changed high schools to include different tracks and electives, increased professionalism of the educational bureaucracy and instituted standardization of curricula, testing and even building design. They advocated for consolidation of schools and districts, more centralized administration, increased spending and expanded school services. In the cities they drastically reduced the number of board members and delegated decision - making to experts, including superintendents and central staff. In the countryside, smaller school districts were consolidated into large districts, drastically reducing the influence of local schools boards and lay people and increasing the power of administrators.

Benefits of New Education Policy 2020

- 1) The policy will provide for a lot of flexibility and convenience to the students. This is a crucial step even for the Institutions to place them at par with the International Higher Education Institutions.
- 2) The restructuring of the 10+2 school curriculum, is one of the major highlights of this comprehensive policy, and will make the education system more viable.
- 3) The regional languages have been given the due importance, especially in a country like ours where we are proud of our diversity, this was a step in the right direction.
- 4) Having a single regulatory body will make it more structured and efficient to analyse and monitor the education system.
- 5) The Academic Bank of Credit is a masterstroke, students at the undergraduate level will certainly benefit from this,

and the flexibility it brings Physical education according to NEP 2020 In India educational institutions have existed since the emergence of civilisation (Keay, 1972). It is essential to view the historical background of education policy in order to understand its current status.

A sound understanding of education policy could be gained by dividing the historical analysis into two time periods, these being pre - independence and the period after independence. Sports - integration is another cross - curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes physical activities including indigenous sports, in pedagogical practices to help in developing skills such as collaboration, self - initiative, self - direction, self - discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, etc.

Khelo India programme: Khelo India Programme is a national yojana/scheme for the development of sports in India. It was launched in the year 2018 by the then Sports Minister Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore in Delhi. . . . The program strives to promote "Sports for Excellence" as well as "Sports for All". A fit and healthy individual leads to an equally healthy society and strong nation. The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass - root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.

2. Conclusion

NEP has addressed the social and gender gap in the education system. The policy has stated that there is an evident gap in the representation of the various social groups in the education system. It has emphasized on the need to overcome the same with regulated interventions. NEP also identified the gender gap in the education system and suggested a mechanism to address it. Quality of teaching is one of the primary agendas of the policy as well. Teachers are integral to the education system, and without improving the way teachers are trained, it will be difficult to improve the quality of education. Reforms in education are not easy. There are too many players in the game and to motivate them in a particular direction is a stupendous task. Academicians and education administrators are the hardest to convince. Rooted as they are in their past, education for them is etched in self - replication. Therefore, they are unlikely change agents. But in the absence of a choice of starting on a clean slate, the focus has to be on how to identify, prepare and retrain education leaders such as vice - chancellors, principals, headmistresses, registrars, etc. Let us hope for better physical education and sports in the secondary school scenario.

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