

## EMPOWERING SPORTS EDUCATORS: A STUDY ON THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF SPORTS EDUCATION UNDER THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

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### Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's educational framework, aiming for holistic and multidisciplinary learning. One of its significant inclusions is the emphasis on physical education and sports as essential components of a child's overall development. This paper explores the evolving role and expanded scope of sports educators within the framework of NEP 2020. It examines the policy's directives, evaluates implementation challenges, and highlights opportunities for the professional growth of sports educators. The study also offers recommendations to integrate sports education more effectively into the mainstream curriculum, ultimately empowering sports educators to contribute meaningfully to the national educational goals.

### INTRODUCTION:

Sports and physical education have long been underestimated within India's formal education system. However, NEP 2020 seeks to change this narrative by placing physical wellness and extracurricular engagement at the heart of student development. This paper studies how NEP 2020 transforms the perception and profession of sports educators in India, emphasizing their role in shaping a healthier, more disciplined, and more productive generation. The historical focus of Indian education on rote learning and academic achievement left little room for sports, despite increasing global awareness of the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of physical activity. Traditional school systems often viewed sports as optional or recreational rather than educational. This limited approach has contributed to high stress levels, reduced physical fitness, and inadequate career opportunities in the field of sports education.

NEP 2020 reverses this mindset by viewing sports as an essential domain of learning. It integrates physical education into the curriculum from foundational stages and proposes multidisciplinary models of education where sports are on par with other subjects. It also focuses on inclusive and equitable access to sports facilities, addressing gender gaps and promoting indigenous games. Furthermore, the NEP advocates for skill-based vocational education, where sports training is included as a viable career option. The evolving role of sports educators under this policy not only enhances their visibility and respect in the education sector but also provides structured professional development avenues. In this context, the role of sports educators expands beyond coaching to mentoring, curriculum planning, life-skills training, and health education. This transformation offers new opportunities and responsibilities, requiring educators to be well-

versed in pedagogy, psychology, and fitness science. This study explores how NEP 2020 impacts the landscape of sports education in India, specifically focusing on the professional empowerment of sports educators through policy frameworks, curriculum changes, and institutional support systems.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

To analyse the provisions related to sports education in NEP 2020.

To evaluate the evolving role of sports educators in the context of the new education policy.

To identify the opportunities and challenges faced by sports educators post-NEP implementation.

To provide suggestions for the effective implementation and professional development of sports educators.

## 3. Review of Literature

### 1. Mishra, A. (2017)

Mishra analyzed the role of physical education in promoting overall student development in Indian secondary schools. The study emphasized that lack of curriculum focus and inadequate recognition of physical educators negatively affected student health and learning outcomes. Additionally, Mishra pointed out that insufficient infrastructure further hampers the delivery of quality physical education. This review supports the current study by highlighting the need for policy intervention to empower sports educators.

### 2. Sharma, R. & Mehta, K. (2019)

Their study focused on the employment trends and career challenges faced by sports teachers in rural India. It found that the absence of clear professional pathways and training programs hindered the growth of sports education. The authors also stressed the lack of regular performance evaluations and incentives for physical educators. Moreover, they highlighted regional disparities in policy enforcement, making the profession less attractive in underdeveloped areas. This aligns with the NEP

2020 agenda to standardize training and elevate the professional status of sports educators.

### 3. Kumar, S. (2020)

Kumar examined global best practices in integrating sports with mainstream education and compared them with India's scenario. He concluded that India needed a policy-level overhaul to make sports a core academic discipline. His research anticipated several reforms that NEP 2020 has now introduced, validating the direction this current paper investigates. Furthermore, Kumar recommended establishing dedicated sports education councils and mentorship programs to support new educators in the field. He also noted the growing importance of technology and data analytics in modern sports pedagogy, suggesting a need for digital training modules.

## 4. Sports Education and NEP 2020

NEP 2020 reimagines education as multidisciplinary, with physical education positioned as a core subject. Key provisions include:

NEP 2020 reimagines education as multidisciplinary, with physical education positioned as a core subject. The policy underscores the importance of fitness, teamwork, resilience, and leadership that sports education fosters among students. Recognizing the profound impact of sports on mental and physical health, NEP aims to elevate sports education from an extracurricular activity to a structured, integral component of academic curricula. It envisions every learner achieving a balanced development of body and mind. Moreover, it aligns sports with the broader goals of holistic education and national development.

### *Key provisions include:*

**Mandatory Sports and Physical Activity in Schools:** Schools are required to ensure regular physical activity through a diverse range of sports, physical education classes, and fitness programs. These activities are designed not just for physical fitness but also for fostering

teamwork, discipline, and leadership among students.

**Recognition of Sports as a Formal Academic Discipline:** Sports education is treated on par with other subjects, promoting equal respect and academic credit for students excelling in the field. This initiative also ensures that students pursuing careers in sports receive structured academic support.

**Emphasis on Vocational Education:** The policy encourages institutions to introduce vocational streams related to sports management, fitness training, physiotherapy, and coaching at the secondary level. These vocational courses offer practical skills, career-oriented training, and industry exposure, allowing students to make informed career choices. Schools are expected to partner with sports academies and professionals for hands-on training modules. Students can also benefit from internships, apprenticeships, and career counselling aligned with their vocational streams.

**Integration of Local and Indigenous Games:** In line with preserving cultural heritage, traditional Indian sports such as kabaddi, kho-kho, and mallakhamb are to be included in school sports curricula. This move helps promote national pride and inclusivity while fostering cultural appreciation through sport.

**Promotion of Sports Infrastructure and Professional Development:** Government support is extended for upgrading playgrounds, equipment, and training facilities. Teachers are also encouraged to pursue continuous professional development and specialised certifications. In addition, initiatives are underway to identify talent and provide scholarships, mentoring, and support systems for aspiring athletes.

These provisions aim to reduce the academic-sports dichotomy and create inclusive platforms for talent development, recognising the crucial role of sports in fostering well-rounded, competent, and healthy individuals.



## 5. Role of Sports Educators under NEP 2020

Sports educators are now expected to play a dynamic and multifaceted role within the educational system. As NEP 2020 emphasises holistic development, the responsibilities of sports educators have expanded beyond traditional coaching. They are increasingly viewed as vital contributors to the overall growth, mental health, and physical well-being of students. With the integration of physical education into mainstream academics, sports educators must adapt to modern pedagogical methods and assume roles that bridge physical fitness with cognitive and emotional development.

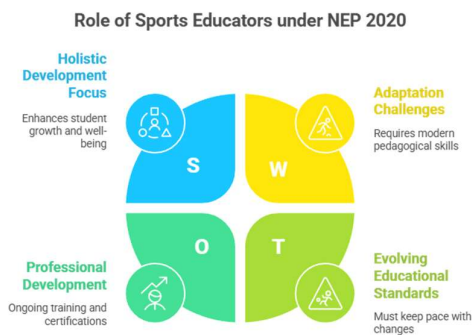
**Design age-appropriate physical activities and fitness programs:** Sports educators must tailor activities to suit the developmental stages of children. These programs should focus on enhancing strength, flexibility, coordination, and endurance while ensuring safety and inclusivity. The aim is to cultivate lifelong habits of physical fitness and self-discipline.

**Serve as mentors for holistic development and life skills:** Beyond teaching sports techniques, educators are expected to instil values such as teamwork, leadership, perseverance, and respect. They act as role models and guides, helping students develop emotional resilience and a positive attitude towards life challenges.

**Collaborate with subject teachers to foster interdisciplinary learning:** Sports educators must coordinate with academic staff to integrate physical activities with subjects like science (biomechanics, nutrition), mathematics

## Material and Method:

(game statistics), and moral education. This cross-disciplinary approach enriches learning and emphasizes the relevance of physical education in everyday life.



**Facilitate inclusive participation in sports, including for students with disabilities:** Creating an inclusive environment where every student, regardless of ability, can participate and thrive is a key responsibility. This involves adapting activities, using

assistive equipment, and fostering a culture of respect and encouragement.

**Continuously upgrade skills through training, workshops, and certifications:** To remain effective and relevant, sports educators must pursue ongoing professional development. They should stay updated with the latest methodologies, sports science research, child psychology, and safety protocols. Certifications in first aid, inclusive education, and coaching specialisations are essential in this evolving landscape.

## 6. Challenges in Implementation

Despite the progressive vision, several barriers remain:

**Inadequate infrastructure and sports equipment in schools:** Many schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, lack basic facilities like playgrounds, indoor sports rooms, and essential equipment. This severely restricts students' access to quality physical education. Even when sports are included in the

timetable, the absence of necessary infrastructure diminishes their effectiveness.

**Lack of trained and qualified sports educators, especially in rural areas:** There is a significant shortage of certified physical education teachers who possess the expertise to deliver age-appropriate and inclusive sports training. Rural schools often rely on part-time or underqualified staff, leading to inconsistent delivery of sports education.

**Poor career progression and salary structure for sports professionals:** Sports educators frequently face stagnant career paths with limited opportunities for promotions or skill advancement. In comparison to their academic counterparts, they often receive lower salaries and fewer benefits, which can demotivate skilled professionals from entering or staying in the field.

**Cultural bias favouring academics over sports:** The prevailing societal attitude in many parts of India still prioritises academic success over sports achievement. This mindset discourages students from actively participating in sports and deters parents from supporting careers in physical education.

**Limited awareness among school administrations regarding NEP guidelines:** Many school leaders and administrators are either unaware of or inadequately informed about the detailed provisions related to sports education in NEP 2020. This knowledge gap results in weak policy implementation, a lack of prioritisation, and insufficient allocation of resources for sports activities.

## 7. Scope and Opportunities

NEP 2020 opens various avenues for sports educators by formally integrating physical education into the national academic framework. This paradigm shift enables sports educators to expand their professional identity and engage with education at multiple levels.

### **Material and Method:**

**Recognition as formal teaching staff in multidisciplinary institutions:** Sports educators are now recognized as integral members of the academic faculty. This recognition enhances their professional dignity, improves job stability, and enables participation in institutional decision-making bodies.

### **Opportunities for research and specialization in sports science, nutrition, and psychology:**

The policy supports advanced study and interdisciplinary research in emerging areas such as kinesiology, sports biomechanics, performance psychology, and sports nutrition. These fields offer avenues for academic growth, publishing, and expert consultation roles.

### **Demand for certified trainers, coaches, and curriculum developers:**

As schools adopt structured sports curricula, there is an increasing demand for professionals trained in designing curriculum content, coaching methodologies, and assessment tools. Certified experts are also sought after by private academies, fitness centers, and community sports programs.

### **Increased collaboration with NGOs, sports federations, and EdTech platforms:**

NEP 2020 encourages partnerships with organizations that promote sports literacy and inclusivity. This collaboration enhances resource availability, enables outreach to underserved communities, and provides

platforms for skill development and event organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

NEP 2020 offers a timely opportunity to uplift sports education and redefine the role of sports educators in India. With the right implementation strategies, infrastructure support, and professional development plans, sports educators can play a pivotal role in nurturing well-rounded individuals. The policy's vision of holistic development must now translate into action to truly empower sports educators and integrate physical

## **8. Suggestions and Recommendations**

It is recommended that the government invest in building and upgrading sports infrastructure across all schools, especially in rural and underserved regions.

It is recommended that specialized training programs and certifications be introduced for sports educators to enhance their professional competence and teaching methodologies.

It is recommended that awareness campaigns be launched to educate school administrators, parents, and students about the importance of sports education under NEP 2020.

It is recommended that sports educators be given equitable pay scales and structured career progression paths comparable to other academic staff.

It is recommended that local and indigenous games be actively promoted in the curriculum to preserve cultural heritage and diversify sports participation.

It is recommended that regular workshops, seminars, and webinars be organized for sports educators to stay updated with new trends, research, and techniques.

It is recommended that collaboration between educational institutions and external organizations, such as NGOs, sports federations, and private academies, be encouraged to expand access to quality sports education.

education as an indispensable part of the Indian education system. Furthermore, recognizing sports as an academic discipline can elevate its importance and attract talented educators to the field. With better incentives, career pathways,

**Material and Method:**

and community support, the profession of sports education can flourish. Emphasizing inclusivity and cultural relevance will ensure that every child benefits from physical education. In the

long run, empowering sports educators means investing in a healthier and more dynamic future for the nation.

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