

**INTEGRATING SPORTS INTO EDUCATION: ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ON SPORTS LAWS IN INDIA**

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37

**Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a transformative approach to education in India, highlighting the necessity of integrating sports into the academic curriculum. This paper explores the implications of NEP 2020 for sports laws in India, emphasizing existing legal frameworks and the reforms required to support effective implementation. By critically analysing current legislation, this study identifies gaps and proposes recommendations for aligning sports education with national educational objectives. Ultimately, this paper argues that integrating sports into education is crucial for fostering a healthier, more balanced, and socially inclusive society, contributing to the holistic development of students.

**Keywords:** Sports Laws, National Education Policy (NEP), Education System, Physical Education, Sports Integration, Legal Framework in Sports.

**INTRODUCTION**

The integration of sports into education has become a hot topic, especially with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) in India. The year 2020 has been unique for nations all over the world. A significant change that occurred in India, aside from COVID-19, was the creation of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP was introduced in 2020 to enhance the Indian educational system by emphasizing students' total growth, including their mental and physical health. It recognizes the important role sports play in building fitness, teamwork, and leadership skills, and encourages schools to include sports in their curriculum. This shift isn't just about enhancing physical education; it also involves looking at the laws and rules that govern sports in schools. The NEP provides an opportunity to revisit and strengthen the legal protections and rights of student-athletes, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and resources to excel in both academics and sports. This integration can lead to improved infrastructure, increased funding and more comprehensive training programs. On the other hand, challenges may arise in terms of implementation, compliance with existing laws, and the need for coordination among various stakeholders, including educational institutions, sports authorities, and legal bodies.

Prior to NEP 2020, the role of sports in Indian education policy was limited, with few legal provisions explicitly linking education with physical activity. Initiatives like the Khelo India scheme and the creation of the Sports Authority of India were significant steps, but these focused more on competitive sports development rather than integrating sports education at the grassroots level.

The purpose of this research is to analyse the impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) on the legal frameworks governing sports in India, particularly in the context of integrating sports into the education system. This study aims to explore how the NEP can reshape the landscape of sports education, assess the implications for student-athletes, and identify both opportunities and challenges that arise from this integration.

**I. MEANING OF SPORTS**

According to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), "Sport is an essential part of human life. It contributes to physical and emotional development, builds social relationships, and promotes healthy lifestyles." The United Nations defines sport as "all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games".

Sports encompass activities involving physical engagement, competitive spirit, specialized skills, and strategic planning, all governed by established rules and regulations. These pursuits may be undertaken individually or as part of a team and can occur in both indoor and outdoor settings. The objective in sports varies, from scoring points and crossing the finish line first to surpassing an

opponent's performance, all while upholding fair play and sportsmanship. Beyond fostering physical health and fitness, sports encourage social interaction, teamwork, and personal growth.

## II. INTEGRAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

Integral education refers to an educational approach that aims to foster the overall development of an individual, encompassing not only academic knowledge but also physical, emotional, social, and ethical aspects. When integrated with sports, it creates a comprehensive learning experience that goes beyond the traditional classroom setting. The combination of integral education and sports contributes to the holistic development of individuals. The NEP 2020 lays out ambitious objectives concerning sports education, recognizing its critical role in a child's overall development. Key objectives of the NEP related to sports include:

**1. Physical Development:** Sports, being inherently physical activities, contribute significantly to physical fitness and health. Integrating sports into education ensures that students engage in regular physical exercise, improving cardiovascular health, muscle strength, flexibility, and overall well-being.

**2. Ethical Values:** Sports often come with a set of rules and ethical standards. Integrating sports into education provides an opportunity to instill values such as fairness, sportsmanship, respect for opponents, and adherence to rules. Students learn about the importance of integrity and ethical conduct.

**3. Cognitive Benefits:** Physical activity, including sports, has been linked to improved cognitive function. Regular exercise is associated with enhanced concentration, better academic performance can support the intellectual development of students.

**4. Equity and Inclusion:** A primary goal of the NEP is to make sports accessible to all students, particularly marginalized and disadvantaged groups. By fostering inclusivity, the policy aims to create an environment where every student has the opportunity to engage in sports, thereby promoting social integration.

**5. Mental and Social Well-being:** Engaging in sports contributes to essential life skills such as teamwork, leadership, discipline, and resilience. These skills benefit students in their academic pursuits and prepare them for challenges in their personal and professional lives.

**6. Development of Sports Talent:** The NEP emphasizes identifying and nurturing sports talent from a young age, creating opportunities for students to excel in various sports disciplines. By integrating sports education, the policy seeks to provide a foundation for future athletes.

**7. Promotion of Sports Culture:** The NEP aims to foster a culture of physical activity and healthy living by embedding sports into the educational framework, encouraging students to adopt lifelong fitness practices.

**8. Economic significance:** Sports have a significant economic impact, generating revenue through ticket sales, sponsorships, and advertising. Sports can create jobs and stimulate economic growth, particularly in the areas of tourism and hospitality

Integrating sports into integral education requires a thoughtful curriculum that combines academic learning with physical activities. It involves creating an environment where students are encouraged to participate in sports, fostering a culture that values both intellectual and physical pursuits for a more well-rounded and holistic educational experience

## III. EXISTING SPORTS LEGISLATION IN INDIA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO EDUCATION

In India, sports regulatory bodies like the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Indian Olympic Association operate with significant autonomy. To support sports development, the Government of India established the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, focusing on building infrastructure, achieving excellence in various competitive events, and promoting sports at both national and international levels. Initially, National Sports Federations (NSFs) were made responsible for the promotion of sports across the country. While these NSFs are largely

independent, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and sports periodically issues notifications and guidelines to ensure effective regulation and alignment with national goals.

The Sports Authority of India, as the apex body, coordinates numerous sports activities across the country. The Government of India has introduced various schemes related to awards, sports events, and other initiatives to promote athletics and sports culture. The National Sports Policy of 2001 primarily aims to achieve excellence in sports at both national and international levels.

Sports law in India is regulated and governed by:

A. Sports Authority of India

B. National Sports Policy

C. Sports Law and Welfare Association of India

D. Sports Broadcasting Signals (Mandatory Sharing with Prasar Bharati) Act, 2007

1. **The Sports Authority of India:** Sports Authority of India was established on 16th March, 1984 by the Government of India for the purpose of look after of the infrastructure created for the IX Asian Games. The primary objective of SAI was to implement the existing promotions, schemes and development of sports pursuits, to persuade people to conduct research works with an objective to bring development in the sports field and to utilise and construct numerous kinds of facilities, such as residential facilities, necessary infrastructures, various training centres and centres to conduct tournaments, championships, competitions, seminars and conferences at various levels. For the above-mentioned purposes, the Sports Authority of India is divided into four wings, those are, academic wing, operation wing, team wing and stadia wing and each wing is assigned with a different set of functions. However, SAI's focus has primarily been on competitive sports rather than grassroots education. Although initiatives like "Khelo India" aim to promote sports among youth, there is a lack of formal legal backing for school-level sports initiatives.

#### **Implications for NEP 2020:**

**Expansion of the SAI Act:** The Act should be amended to include provisions that specifically support school sports initiatives, thereby encouraging collaboration between SAI and educational institutions.

**Development of Comprehensive Curriculum:** SAI can work alongside educational bodies to create a curriculum that effectively integrates sports education into schools, ensuring uniformity and standardization across the nation.

#### 2. **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**

The RTE Act mandates free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14. However, it does not explicitly include physical education as a mandatory subject within the curriculum. This omission limits the potential for sports to be recognized as a vital component of holistic education.

#### **Proposed Amendments:**

**Inclusion of Physical Education:** Recognizing physical education as a fundamental right by amending the RTE Act to include sports as a core subject would enhance its status within the educational framework.

**Infrastructure Standards:** Establishing minimum infrastructure standards for sports facilities in schools is essential to ensure equitable access to physical education across diverse regions.

#### 3. **National Sports Development Code of India, 2011**

Government has taken various steps to further improve the management of National Sports Federations (NSFs) and sports in the country such as notification of the Anti-Doping Code; introduction of annual recognition of NSFs; measures to ensure free, fair and transparent elections by the NSFs; and measures to combat age fraud in sports; and guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment of women in sports. The various orders/circulars issued by the Government from time to time are amalgamated under this National Sports Development Code of India, 2011

The NSDCI regulates national sports bodies and aims to promote sports across India. However, it lacks directives regarding sports education in schools. Amending the NSDCI to include guidelines for integrating sports into educational curricula is essential to align with NEP 2020's objectives.

**School Sports Programs:** Introducing standards for school sports programs that cover infrastructure, training, and equipment will help ensure that students receive quality sports education.

**Community-Based Initiatives:** Encouraging community-based sports initiatives that foster collaboration between schools and local sports organizations will enhance the overall sports culture.

#### 4. **National Youth Policy, 2014**

The National Youth Policy recognizes the role of sports in youth development but lacks mechanisms for enforcing sports integration at the educational level. Strengthening this policy through legal mandates for schools to incorporate sports programs can reinforce NEP's objectives.

### **CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING NEP'S SPORTS INTEGRATION GOALS**

While NEP 2020 sets ambitious goals for integrating sports into education, several challenges hinder effective implementation:

**1. Inadequate Infrastructure in Schools:** Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack essential sports infrastructure like playgrounds and equipment, which restricts students' access to physical activities. To address this, the government should allocate dedicated funds to develop sports facilities in public schools, with a focus on rural and underprivileged regions to ensure equitable access. Additionally, encouraging public-private partnerships through incentives can further enhance sports infrastructure in government-funded schools, providing students with improved facilities and resources to support physical education.

**2. Financial Constraints:** Budget constraints, particularly in low-income and rural schools, limit resources for sports programs, hindering efforts to meet the NEP's goals for sports education. To address this, establishing a National Sports Education Fund would provide a dedicated financial source for school sports infrastructure and programs. Additionally, setting aside specific funds within school budgets for sports education would allow schools to allocate resources effectively and make use of local facilities.

**3. Lack of Qualified Physical Education Instructors:** There is a shortage of trained physical education instructors in Indian schools, especially in rural areas, where general teachers often handle sports training without specialized expertise, limiting its effectiveness. To address this, national training programs for physical education teachers, conducted in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and recognized sports institutions, would help standardize and improve training quality. Additionally, implementing a certification system under the RTE Act, which mandates that schools employ only certified physical education instructors, would further strengthen the quality of sports education.

#### **Disparities in Access between Urban and Rural Schools**

Urban schools, particularly private ones, generally have better sports facilities, whereas rural schools often lack even basic infrastructure for a comprehensive sports curriculum. To address this disparity, establishing minimum standards for sports facilities and directing additional resources to rural schools is essential to close the gap. Additionally, fostering partnerships between urban and rural schools can encourage resource sharing, joint sports events, and student exchanges, ultimately enhancing access to sports and increasing participation across regions.

### **NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM INDIA AS A SPORTING NATION**

In his inaugural address at the second Khelo India Winter Games, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India remarked that sports have been given a place of pride in the recent National Education Policy (NEP 2020). An extra-curricular activity, Sports, now will be an integral part of the school and college curriculum with grading in sports counted in the education of the children.

The school education system in India caters to around 26 crore students through a network of 15 lac schools with ~18 crore enrolments in rural India, thus paving the way for scaling sports across the country. The existing schemes of the Government of India such as the Samagra Shiksha, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, etc have a special emphasis on promoting sports in the remotest part of the country.

Samagra Shiksha, the flagship scheme of school education in India has components that exclusively focus on providing sports equipment to schools and supporting the Khelo India Scheme. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme has set up at least one residential girls school in every educationally backward block of India. The scheme provides access to a high-quality holistic education to girls from marginalized communities -- SC, ST, OBC, BPL, and minorities – from class VI-XII in residential mode.

The Eklavya Model Residential Schools scheme aims to provide holistic education to students from Scheduled Tribes (ST) in tribal areas across India, with a strong emphasis on sports. As part of this initiative, Centres of Excellence for Sports (COE for Sports) have been established in these schools. Each Centre of Excellence will feature state-of-the-art facilities for one selected individual sport and one team sport in each state, with scientific support. The centres will offer specialized training, accommodation, sports kits, equipment, competitive exposure, insurance, medical care, and other amenities as per the standards of the Sports Authority of India.

Sports is a scientific discipline that requires a strategic roadmap to nurture future talent and foster a sporting culture in India. Certain sports offer Indians a natural advantage due to genetic factors or long-standing cultural ties. A campaign like "One State, One Sport" could be beneficial, encouraging each state to focus on a primary sport where it holds a competitive edge, along with a few secondary sports that receive slightly less emphasis.

Besides these schemes to realize the vision of NEP 2020, comprehensive legal reforms must be enacted to ensure the effective integration of sports into the educational system. Thus, establishing a dedicated National Sports in Education Act would provide a robust legal framework for integrating sports into schools. Also amending the RTE Act to include provisions for sports education as a fundamental right would solidify its importance within the educational framework and each state should develop its sports policy to reflect the unique needs and challenges of its educational institutions. State policies should focus on:

## CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020 offers a unique opportunity to transform India's educational landscape by integrating sports into the curriculum. To realize this vision, it is essential to thoroughly understand the existing legal frameworks, identify gaps, and develop effective policies that promote sports education. By implementing the proposed reforms and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, India can nurture a vibrant sports culture within its educational institutions, enhancing the physical, mental, and social well-being of students. Ultimately, incorporating sports into education not only improves academic performance but also contributes to the development of well-rounded, physically active, and socially responsible citizens.

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