

Adult Education and Physical Education in NEP 2020: A Holistic Vision for Lifelong Learning and Well-being

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents education as a lifelong process that extends beyond formal schooling and supports the full development of individuals (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). This paper examines how adult education and physical education together advance the policy's holistic vision of learning, health, and well-being (*NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024; *NEP-2020 Physical Education, Sports and Yoga Curriculum*, 2021). It also includes global examples of adult physical education programs, such as community fitness classes and older-adult exercise initiatives, to show how lifelong physical activity is being encouraged internationally (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). The discussion argues that NEP 2020 connects literacy, skills, physical health, and social inclusion within a single framework of lifelong development (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023).

KEYWORDS: adult education, lifelong learning, physical education, NEP 2020, yoga, well-being, community fitness.

1. INTRODUCTION

NEP 2020 reframes education as a lifelong process rather than a stage limited to formal schooling (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). In this framework, adult education becomes necessary for literacy, skill development, recognition of prior learning, and social empowerment (Government of India, 2020; *Empowering Adults Through Lifelong Learning: A NEP Perspective*, 2023). Physical education is similarly broadened beyond school sport to include wellness, movement, exercise, yoga, and active living throughout adulthood (*NEP-2020 Physical Education, Sports and Yoga Curriculum*, 2021; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). The policy's holistic orientation makes adult learning and physical well-being mutually reinforcing goals (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023).

2. Adult Education in NEP 2020

Adult education in NEP 2020 is closely linked to universal literacy, continuing education, and the recognition of prior learning (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). The policy acknowledges that adults need flexible and practical opportunities to learn because their educational trajectories are often shaped by work, family, and life responsibilities (*NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024; *NEP 2020 to Introduce Adult and Lifelong Learning Program*, 2022). It also reflects the view that knowledge gained through lived experience should be valued and formally recognized (*Empowering Adults Through Lifelong*

Learning: A NEP Perspective, 2023). In this sense, adult education becomes both an equity measure and a strategy for national development (Government of India, 2020; *Adult Education for Nation Development Under NEP 2020*, 2023).

The policy further supports adult education by promoting skill development, lifelong learning, and access to educational resources for all sections of society (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). This approach is significant because adult learning contributes to employability, civic participation, digital inclusion, and personal confidence (*Adult Education for Nation Development Under NEP 2020*, 2023; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). By linking literacy with lifelong capability building, NEP 2020 presents adult education as a foundation for social transformation (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024).

3. Physical Education and Well-being

NEP 2020 also gives physical education, sports, and yoga a prominent place in the education system (*NEP-2020 Physical Education, Sports and Yoga Curriculum*, 2021; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). These are presented not merely as activities for recreation, but as core elements of holistic growth, discipline, emotional balance, and health (*NEP-2020 Physical Education, Sports and Yoga Curriculum*, 2021; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). The policy thus recognizes that education must nurture the body as well as the mind (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). This is especially relevant for adults, whose health and work capacity are strongly influenced by physical activity (CDC, 2025; Levy et al., 2020).

Community-based exercise programs have been shown to improve physical activity, mobility, function, and general health outcomes among older adults (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). Such programs are often affordable, accessible, and socially supportive, which makes them effective for lifelong participation (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). This evidence aligns well with NEP 2020's emphasis on integrated well-being through movement, fitness, and yoga (*NEP-2020 Physical Education, Sports and Yoga Curriculum*, 2021; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). Physical education therefore supports not only bodily health but also mental resilience and social inclusion (CDC, 2025; Levy et al., 2020).

4. Global Examples

Across the world, adult physical education appears in community fitness programs, senior exercise classes, workplace wellness initiatives, and recreational sports activities (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023; CDC, 2025). In the United States and other countries, community fitness programs are offered through recreation centers and local public health systems, often with a focus on older adults and middle-aged populations (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023). These initiatives typically include aerobic exercise, strength training, flexibility work, and social support, making participation more sustainable (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023; Levy et al., 2020).

International evidence also shows that programs such as community-based exercise models can be successfully implemented and maintained for older adults (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). Research on community exercise programs has found that accessible, low-cost, and structured sessions help reduce sedentary behavior and improve health outcomes (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). In Singapore, community-based physical fitness programmes for older adults emphasize strength, balance, flexibility, fall prevention, and active ageing (*Community-Based Physical Fitness Programme*, n.d.). These examples demonstrate that adult physical education is already a

recognized public health and educational practice in many settings (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023; Levy et al., 2020).

5. DISCUSSION

The combined focus on adult education and physical education in NEP 2020 reflects a broader understanding of education as a lifelong social good (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). Adult education addresses literacy, employability, and inclusion, while physical education addresses health, vitality, and quality of life (*Adult Education for Nation Development Under NEP 2020*, 2023; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). Both are necessary to build capable, adaptive, and healthy citizens in a rapidly changing society (Government of India, 2020; Levy et al., 2020). The policy's holistic vision is therefore strengthened when adult learning and physical well-being are treated as complementary, not separate, priorities (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023).

The global examples also suggest that adult physical education should be supported through flexible community-based models rather than school-like structures (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023; Levy et al., 2020). Such models are more inclusive of older adults, working adults, and learners with limited time or mobility (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). They show how lifelong well-being can be advanced through practical, affordable, and socially engaging activity formats (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2023; Levy et al., 2020). NEP 2020 can thus be viewed as part of a wider international movement toward lifelong learning and active ageing (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024).

6. CONCLUSION

Adult education and physical education are central to the holistic vision of NEP 2020 (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024). Adult education promotes lifelong literacy, skills, and empowerment, while physical education promotes health, movement, and well-being (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020 on Sports & Yoga*, 2023). Global examples of community fitness and older-adult exercise programs demonstrate that physical education can successfully extend across the lifespan (Levy et al., 2020; CDC, 2025). Together, these dimensions show that NEP 2020 is not only a school reform document but also a framework for lifelong human development (Government of India, 2020; *NEP 2020's Commitment to Adult Education*, 2024).

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