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PHYSICAL LITERACY AS A CATALYST FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN FOUNDATIONAL STAGE ALIGNS WITH NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises the importance of holistic, inclusive, and equitable education beginning at the foundational stage, with a focus on experiential and play-based learning methodologies. The foundational stage, which serves children aged 3–8, is crucial for the development of cognitive, social, and physical skills. Physical literacy, characterised by competence, motivation, and confidence in physical activity, aligns with the objectives of NEP 2020.This study examines physical literacy as a means to promote inclusive education during foundational stage in accordance with NEP 2020. Physical literacy, which includes competence, motivation, and confidence in physical activities, facilitates cognitive, emotional, and social development. Integrating physical literacy into the foundational curriculum addresses diverse learning needs, facilitating equitable access to education for all children, including those with disabilities. This study examines global best practices and provides practical recommendations for their implementation within the Indian context. The study utilises global and local best practices to demonstrate its capacity to meet varied learning needs, promote equity, and improve engagement. Policy interventions, teacher training, and infrastructure development are recommended to effectively integrate physical literacy into the NEP 2020 framework.

Keywords: Physical Literacy, Inclusive Education, Foundational Stage, NEP 2020, Holistic Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates for a transformative educational framework that prioritises equity, inclusivity, and comprehensive development. The NEP 2020 signifies a significant transformation in India's educational framework, focussing on holistic development, experiential learning, and inclusivity (Government of India [GOI], 2020). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong emphasis on a play-based, inclusive, and comprehensive approach to foundational education. By supporting experiential and activity-based learning, the policy combines the ideas of inclusive education with physical literacy (Ministry of Education, 2020). In keeping with the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on inclusive and equitable education, NEP 2020 also emphasizes the significance

of guaranteeing children from underserved communities and those with special needs access to high-quality education. The NEP 2020 highlights the importance of activity-based, inclusive, and child-centred pedagogies that address diverse learning needs (Government of India, 2020). The NEP emphasizes the significance of fostering inclusive environments that enable children of all abilities to flourish and emphasizes physical development as a fundamental component of foundational stage learning. Foundational stage education is essential for the development of cognitive and socio-emotional skills. The foundational stage of education establishes the basis for lifelong learning and comprehensive development. Foundational stage education significantly enhances individual prosperity and benefits both families and society at large (Kaur, 2023). The early stages of life are critical for the development of a child's physical and mental health. Children's skills can be cultivated through Foundational stage education. When a child receives adequate care, nutritious food, a healthy environment, quality education, and social security, both the child's future and that of society are secured. In the foundational stage of education, physical literacy promotes cognitive abilities, including spatial awareness, problem-solving, and motor skills. To foster physical competence and confidence in foundational stage programs that incorporate physical literacy place an emphasis on both structured and unstructured game (Robinson et al., 2015). Physical literacy refers to the capacity to move effectively and confidently in various environments, which corresponds with NEP's focus on integrated and equitable learning (Whitehead, 2019). Physical literacy encompasses physical competence, knowledge, and attitudes that promote lifelong engagement in physical activities, aligning with the foundational education vision outlined in NEP 2020. The integration of physical literacy in foundational stage education enhances inclusivity by accommodating varied learning needs, supporting social-emotional growth, and promoting active participation. Physical literacy, which integrates physical, emotional, and cognitive domains, provides a novel approach to achieving these objectives. Studies indicate that the incorporation of physical literacy in early education promotes inclusivity by providing equitable opportunities for children with diverse abilities(Tremblay et al., 2018).This study analyses the potential of physical literacy to reshape foundational education in India, focussing on issues like accessibility, gender inequality, and varied learning requirements. The research additionally suggests practical strategies to integrate physical literacy with the inclusive education goals outlined in NEP 2020.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

The NEP 2020 represents a crucial reform of India's education system, occurring after a 34-year interval, with the objective of restructuring the system to align with the demands of the twenty-first century. The policy aims to ensure equal, accessible, and high-quality education for all learners, irrespective of socioeconomic status, while promoting trans-disciplinary learning and critical thinking to foster responsible and productive citizenship (NEP, 2020). This legal instrument comprehensively addresses all phases of education, from early childhood care to higher education, with the aim of promoting trans-disciplinary learning and critical thinking. The policy recognizes the importance of technology in education and suggests the establishment of a National Educational Technology Forum to facilitate the development and implementation of educational technology (Huang, 2019). NEP 2020 highlights the importance of healthy brain development during early learning, indicating that more than 85% of a child's brain matures by age 6 (Chand, 2015). The implementation of early education would enhance activities aimed at providing suitable care and cognitive stimulation for a child's brain development. Learning in elementary school prepares children's developing minds, which require appropriate guidance during the formative stage. Focusing on early childhood education enhances the preparedness of future leaders by addressing children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs (Khatak et al., 2022). NEP 2020 introduces a significant change by replacing the 10+2 educational structure with a 5+3+3+4 framework. The existing 10+2 structure is fully supplanted by the 5+3+3+4 framework, which aligns with the age groups of 3–8, 8–11, 11–14, and 14–18. Three years of preschool and twelve years of schooling are divided into a foundational stage lasting five years, which is further segmented into two components: three years of preschool and two years of primary education, encompassing ages three to six. The preparatory stage lasts three years, encompassing grades 3-5 and the ages of 8-11. This stage follows two years of education in grades 1-2, which includes the ages of 6-8. The three years of middle school encompass grades 6 to 8, corresponding to the ages of 11 to 14. A four-year secondary school will be segmented into two sections for grades 9 through 12. The initial phase will encompass grades 9 and 10, while the subsequent phase will include grades 11 and 12, targeting ages 14 to 18 (Khatak et al., 2022). The NEP 2020 promotes a comprehensive and interdisciplinary framework for education, incorporating art, athletics, and physical education alongside academic

learning to facilitate student development. This strategy is consistent with physical literacy concepts that highlight the importance of cognitive and emotional development alongside physical competence and confidence (NEP 2020).

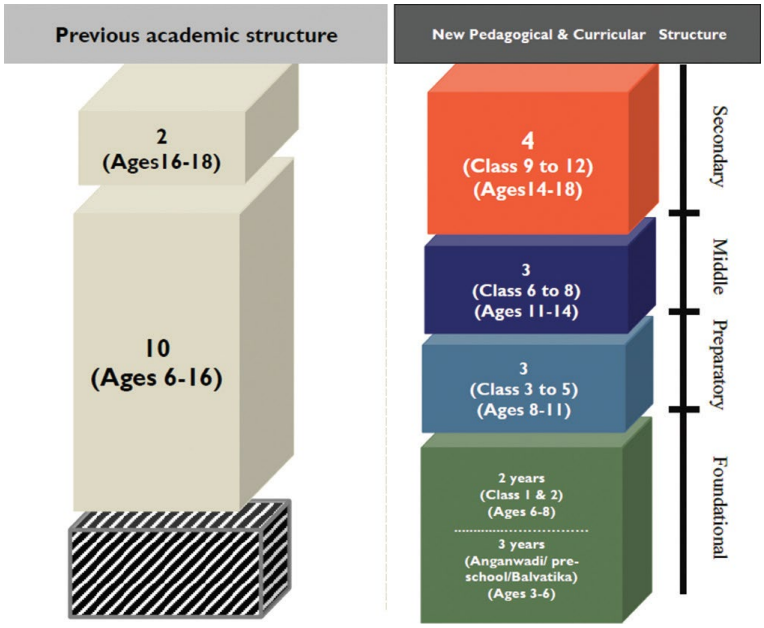

Figure 1 Structure of Education System under NEP 2020.

Source https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

2.2. PHYSICAL LITERACY

The ability to participate in physical activities consistently throughout one's life, supported by intrinsic drive, self-efficacy, instruction, and awareness, is known as physical literacy (Whitehead, 2019). It includes not only the physical but also the mental, emotional, and social aspects of growth and development. Developing physical literacy goes beyond just being physically strong.It also involves teaching people to enjoy being active for the rest of their lives.

Stodden et al. (2008) demonstrated that encouraging physical literacy in young children can have positive effects on their cognitive development, self-confidence, and motor skill competence. According to Robinson et al. (2015), physical literacy programs aim to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, have equal chances to participate in meaningful physical activities. Physical activity is increasingly common among young children in early childhood and care education environments (Barratt et al., 2022). Developing children's physical literacy represents a promising intervention to enhance physical activity in these settings.

According to Whitehead (2019), physical literacy is the growth of physical competence, self-assurance, and the desire to be physically active throughout one's life. Since it establishes the groundwork for lifetime physical activity and general well-being, it is becoming more widely acknowledged as a crucial component of healthy development in early childhood (Stodden et al., 2008). Because young children develop their motor skills quickly, which promotes their cognitive and emotional development, the early years are crucial for the development of physical literacy (Gagen & Getchell, 2006; Favazza & Siperstein, 2016).

The preschool years represent a crucial period for physical literacy and activity behaviours, which are essential elements of early motor development (Buckler et al., 2019). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings serve as potential avenues for fostering engagement in these behaviours. Physical literacy provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the various factors that may affect an individual's engagement in physical activity. This project aims to evaluate the physical literacy of educators and identify the components of physical literacy linked to their behaviours and intentions in offering physical literacy and activity opportunities to children under their supervision. Ninety-four employed early childhood educators were recruited for participation. Motivation, confidence, knowledge, understanding, physical competence, and physical activity were evaluated using established instruments or tools developed specifically for this research. The overall physical literacy of educators was moderate, with a mean

understanding score of 4.2 out of 5 and average physical activity behaviour of 11,832 steps per day. The mean range for intentions and behaviours was high, ranging from 4.2 to 4.5 out of 5. Notable main effects were observed for understanding and object control skills concerning a limited set of intention and behaviour questions; however, no correlation was found with the other components of physical literacy. Measured physical literacy was moderate; however, this did not correlate with intentions and behaviours regarding the provision of physical literacy and activity, which were high. Additional research is required to ascertain whether educator-reported behaviours correlate with quality physical literacy and activity experiences in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and the sustained physical literacy and activity of children enrolled in ECECs.

Physical activity-based learning in early childhood education and care (ECEC) prior to school entry has been a longstanding principle of quality and inclusive practice (Irvine, 2016). A substantial body of research, developed over an extended period, supports the connection between physical activity-based games and various learning in developmental outcomes, including cognitive development and higher-order thinking, language and literacy, physical development encompassing children's health and wellbeing, as well as social competence and self-regulation of emotion and behaviour. Physical activity-based approaches to learning in early childhood are associated with the development of advanced learning dispositions, such as curiosity, creativity, enthusiasm, persistence, and imagination, as well as processes including investigation, problem-solving, risk-taking, and critical reflection, which contribute to success in educational settings and beyond. Despite varying viewpoints on Physical activity-basedplay pedagogies and the teacher's role, play is recognised as a means to enhance children's engagement and active learning, while also providing a framework for differentiated teaching and learning. Australia's national Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) emphasises play as a fundamental right of all children, essential to childhood and the primary context for early learning.

Figure 2 Benefits of Physical literacy

Source https://in.pinterest.com/pin/pe-poster-what-is-physical-literacy--115334440438273401/

2.3. EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CARE EDUCATION

The primary aim of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is to foster holistic development across various domains, encompassing physical and motor skills, cognitive abilities, socio-emotional and ethical development, cultural

and artistic expression, along with early communication, language, literacy, and numeracy skills (Fathima & Pandey, 2022). The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) highlights the necessity of achieving universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by 2030, aiming to equip all children for formal schooling upon entering Grade 2. Pre-schools are essential for children aged 3 to 6, as they establish the educational foundation required for progression to Grade 1. The NEP presents a restructured pedagogical and curricular framework that emphasises the significance of formative years. The policy promotes a curriculum grounded in play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning to enhance holistic developmental outcomes. NCERT has been assigned the responsibility of creating a "National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education" (NCPF ECCE) for children aged up to 8 years. The policy additionally proposes the establishment of preparatory classes to facilitate the transition between anganwadis and primary schools. The document delineates strategies for training and certification programs for ECCE educators, predominantly utilising digital platforms, with the primary aim of attaining universal access to early childhood education.

In early childhood settings, children typically spend their weekdays under the supervision of early childhood educators, who are regarded as 'change agents' responsible for fostering children's physical literacy. Consequently, early childhood educators must have sufficient skills, knowledge, and practices to facilitate this development. Nevertheless, research has not yet developed a theory that delineates the essential capabilities and competencies that characterise early childhood educators as Effective Early Childhood Physical Literacy Pedagogues. This paper utilises early childhood research on physical literacy, physical activity, and active play to propose a conceptual model for an Effective Early Childhood Physical Literacy Pedagogue. This model posits that educators' professional identity and the implementation of play-based pedagogy are critical attributes of an Effective Early Childhood Physical Literacy Pedagogue. Moreover, the physical literacy capabilities of educators encompassing psychomotor, affective, social, and cognitive dimensions are acknowledged as essential for fostering the qualities necessary to be an Effective Early Childhood Physical Literacy Pedagogue. This conceptual model offers insights for future research aimed at effectively evaluating and directing physical literacy interventions for early childhood educators.

Early childhood education in India is experiencing substantial transformations, influenced by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022 (Meitei et al., 2022). This study examines effective pedagogical strategies for pre-primary and early childhood care and education (ECCE) in India, in accordance with relevant policy recommendations. This study analyses essential strategies for the implementation of play-based learning, the enhancement of language and literacy skills, the establishment of foundational numeracy competencies, and the integration of inquiry-based and activity-based learning methodologies. The research highlights the significance of developing engaging learning environments that include adequately equipped indoor and outdoor play spaces to promote meaningful play experiences. This document outlines strategies for promoting oral language development, phonological awareness, and early literacy skills through diverse activities and a print-rich classroom environment. Strategies for developing number sense, basic operations, spatial awareness, and additional core numeracy concepts are presented. This paper examines methods for incorporating inquiry-based learning to foster scientific thinking and enhance problem-solving abilities. The paper examines the role of varied activities in fostering holistic development across physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and aesthetic domains. This emphasises the integration of art and experimentation in Early Childhood Care and Education to foster creativity and self-expression. This analysis examines the role of educators, emphasising their contributions to the development of stimulating learning environments and the facilitation of meaningful experiences for children. Implementing these approaches faces challenges such as infrastructure and resource limitations, the necessity for teacher training, the need for parental involvement, and considerations of cultural relevance. The changing policy landscape offers opportunities for transformation via enhanced investment, adaptable curriculum design, and a focus on developmentally suitable practices. The paper concludes with recommendations for future directions, including the enhancement of ECCE infrastructure, improvement of teacher professional development, promotion of community engagement, further research initiatives, and the creation of culturally appropriate resources. This paper synthesises evidence-based practices in alignment with policy directives, offering a comprehensive overview of effective pedagogy aimed at promoting the holistic growth and development of young children in early childhood education in India.

The initial years are essential for the development of physical literacy and engagement in physical activity (Buckler et al., 2021). The rising enrolment of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) highlights the critical role educators play in childhood development and their potential impact on young children's PL journey. Educators undergo

limited training in play-based learning and pedagogical approaches, yet are increasingly directed to incorporate these concepts into early childhood education and care. This study aimed to evaluate educators' professional learning and identify the components associated with their self-reported intentions and behaviours to promote professional learning and physical activity. The educator's professional learning was moderate, whereas self-reported intentions and behaviours regarding the provision of professional learning and physical activity opportunities were high. Only a single component of PL was linked to intentions and behaviours. The professional learning of educators may not clearly convey their intentions and behaviours regarding the provision of professional learning and pedagogical approaches within early childhood education and care frameworks.

Figure 3 Objectives of ECCE

Source: https://setu.etutor.co/blog/early-childhood-care-and-education/

2.4. FOUNDATIONAL STAGE

According to the National Education Policy 2020, the foundational stage stresses an inclusive, flexible, and play-based curriculum for student's ages 3 to 8 (Ministry of Education, 2020). This time frame is thought to be crucial for establishing the social, emotional, and cognitive foundation for lifetime learning. In order to improve children's overall development, physical activities are frequently combined with cognitive learning during this stage. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes an integrated curriculum that prioritizes play, storytelling, and experiential learning, with an emphasis on the foundational stage as the first crucial period of education. The policy stresses that all students must have equal and unfettered access to basic education in order to prevent anyone from falling behind.

According to research, incorporating physical activities into early schooling is important for improving kids' social and academic development. Physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development all rely on the foundational stage, which spans children's ages 3 to 8. During this stage, children's brains are growing at a rapid pace, and they acquire the basics that will serve them well throughout their lives (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). A curriculum that is play-based and activity-driven can help children develop their curiosity, creativity, and overall well-being during this time period (Timmons et al., 2007).

Timmons et al. (2007), stated that physical activity is linked to longer attention spans, which are crucial throughout the formative years. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that early education interventions incorporating physical literacy elements enhance students' adaptive behaviors and preparedness for school (Pate et al., 2022).By encouraging holistic development, incorporating physical literacy into foundational education supports the objectives of early childhood care. While cooperative activities foster social and emotional intelligence, free play, dance, and organized

sports improve motor abilities. According to studies, kids who participate in physical literacy programs in their early years exhibit greater levels of confidence and physical activity in later stages of life (Logan et al., 2012).

Since physical literacy enhances cognitive and socio-emotional development, it is fundamental to early childhood education. During the foundational years, physical literacy-promoting activities aid in the development of focus, memory, and problem-solving skills (Stodden et al., 2008).

There is a special chance to inculcate inclusive attitudes during the foundational period. During this phase, inclusive education makes sure that kids get to know peers from all backgrounds, which promotes empathy and teamwork.

2.5. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

By fostering an inclusive classroom, we can make sure that students from all walks of life and skill levels have the chance to learn in a setting that works for them. Its goals include promoting equality, diversity, and cooperation in the classroom and removing obstacles to learning (UNESCO, 2005).

In order to foster a more inclusive school climate, physical education programs are frequently utilized. Incorporating adapted sports and group activities, for instance, can aid children with impairments in developing social skills, self-esteem, and fundamental motor ability. According to Loreman et al. (2010), a more harmonious and considerate school climate is the result of inclusive education programs that encourage students to empathize with one another.

The goal of inclusive education is to guarantee that every child, irrespective of background or aptitude, receives a high-quality education in a supportive environment (UNESCO, 2005). This strategy emphasizes equal opportunity and the removal of obstacles to learning. Because it may treat developmental delays, support a range of needs, and establish ideals of equity from an early age, early childhood education is a crucial step for implementing inclusive practices (Loreman et al., 2010).

Play and physical activities are frequently highlighted in inclusive education frameworks for kids with disabilities as ways to promote social inclusion, enhance motor skills, and boost self-esteem. According to Carl et al. (2023), integrating physical literacy into inclusive environments allows all kids to engage in meaningful activities and develop a feeling of community.

By offering a framework for physical activities that improve children's confidence, motor skills, and social relationships, physical literacy promotes inclusive education. According to Carl et al. (2018), inclusive play environments, for instance, enable kids with disabilities to engage with their classmates, promoting respect and understanding between them.

All children, regardless of their skills, histories, or socio-economic situation, should have equal access to quality education, and inclusive education works toward that goal. A child-centred approach is prioritized, which promotes a sense of belonging and active engagement while accommodating varied learning requirements (UNESCO, 2005). Because it allows for the early detection of developmental impairments and the support of therapies that cater to children's various needs, early childhood is a vital age for implementing inclusive education methods (Loreman et al., 2010).

Ensuring that all children, especially those from marginalized communities or with disabilities, have access to high-quality early life education is the goal of inclusive education at the foundational stage. To do this, it is essential to use strategies including accessible learning spaces, inclusive play, and individualized instruction (Mitchell, 2019).

3. OBJECTIVES

1) To examine the alignment of physical literacy with NEP 2020's foundational stage goals.
2) To explore the role of physical literacy in promoting inclusive education.
3) To identify challenges and propose strategies for integrating physical literacy into the foundational stage curriculum.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does physical literacy contribute to the holistic development of children in the foundational stage?

What are the key barriers to implementing physical literacy in India under the NEP 2020 framework?

What strategies can be adopted to integrate physical literacy into inclusive education practices?

5. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology to examine the function of physical literacy as a catalyst of inclusive education during the foundational stage, in accordance with the NEP 2020 framework. The methodology consists of the subsequent steps:

Document's Analysis

Primary Sources: Analysis the documents of National Education Policy 2020 and associated policy frameworks that highlight inclusive and physical activity-based learning.

Secondary Sources: Review of journal articles, reports, and books that address physical literacy, foundational education, and inclusive education.

Literature Review

This paper synthesizes findings from both global and Indian studies regarding the influence of physical literacy on cognitive, social, and physical development (Whitehead, 2010; Houser et al., 2019).

This study examines the implementation of inclusive education through physical literacy across various educational systems (Robinson et al., 2015).

Comparative Analysis

This study compares successful global practices, particularly from Canada and Finland, with the Indian context to identify strategies that can be adapted (Sade et al., 2022).

6. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The paper presents a critical analysis of the legal framework governing early childhood care and education in India. India continues to face challenges in the implementation of an effective early childhood care and education system, despite the existence of various national policies and plans. Pre-school education lacks inclusivity, resulting in children from marginalised communities being denied access to crèches or kindergartens. Thus, the study analyses the role of physical literacy as a catalyst for promoting inclusive education during India's foundational stage, emphasising on issues such as gender disparity, diverse learning needs, and accessibility for children with disabilities.

7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VARIABLES

7.1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL LITERACY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Since both physical literacy and inclusive education aim to guarantee that all children have equal opportunity to develop, it is clear that both are inter-dependent.

1) Fostering Participation and Equity

Adaptable and accessible physical literacy programs that adhere to inclusive education principles provide opportunities for students of varying abilities. One strategy to promote equality and lessen stigma is to make adjustments to sports and physical activities so that children with cognitive or physical disabilities can participate completely (Hamilton et al., 2017).

2) Enhancing Social Inclusion

By facilitating group activities that foster cooperation and collaboration, physical literacy encourages social inclusion. Children with and without impairments are able to collaborate in inclusive PE environments, which promotes understanding and acceptance of one another (Carl et al., 2023).

3) Cognitive and Emotional Development

Inclusive education and physical literacy share an emphasis on the importance of the whole child. According to Robinson et al. (2015), participating in inclusive physical activities enhances not just physical competence but also emotional resilience and cognitive skills, which in turn contribute to overall academic achievement.

4) Policy Implications

Physical literacy is one tool that inclusive education frameworks can use to cater to students' varied requirements. All students can benefit from high-quality education and opportunities for physical exercise if policies are in place that encourage activity-based learning and play in inclusive classrooms (UNESCO, 2005).

7.2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOUNDATIONAL STAGE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1) Early Intervention and Support

There is a window of opportunity to recognize and intervene early in cases of learning problems or developmental delays during the foundational stage. According to Odom et al. (2011), inclusive education frameworks help identify children with special needs and provide them with individualized solutions to help them reach their full potential during this important time.

2) Promoting Equity in Early Childhood Education

Guaranteeing equal access to learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities or origins, is the goal of inclusive education throughout the foundational period. Global frameworks such as the NEP 2020 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) support this strategy because they both prioritize equal and inclusive quality education (Ministry of Education, 2020).

3) Fostering Social and Emotional Development

Group activities and cooperative play are examples of inclusive practices that help kids develop their social and emotional competencies. Essential for holistic development in the foundational years, they promote empathy, teamwork, and a sense of belonging (Loreman et al., 2010).

4) Improving Learning Outcomes

All pupils, including those without disabilities, benefit from inclusive education, according to the studies. Children learn to think critically, solve problems, and adapt in inclusive classrooms because of the collaborative and differentiated learning environment (Mitchell, 2019).

5) **Policy Integration**

Make diversity and equity a priority in curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher training by including inclusive practices into the foundational level, as advocated for by NEP 2020. All children can benefit from this alignment, which fosters a more inclusive society and encourages their complete development.

8. DISCUSSION

The goal is enormous, and India is progressing toward it by bringing these young children with them from the beginning of their education (Chandra, 2022). On December 1st, 2022, India became the president of the Group of Twenty (G20). 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' is the topic of the G20 summit that will take place in 2023. This concept connects with India's long-held view that the entire globe is a single family. We intend to collaborate with the countries that make up the G20 to close the gaps in education and skilling. Efforts have been made to understand better the policies and practices being implemented worldwide and explain the plan that India, as one of the countries that make up the G20, is implementing to ensure that all children have access to foundational education. In light of this, we must collaborate to guarantee that every child has the opportunity to achieve success in life and access to high-quality elementary and secondary education. From this point forward, India aims to concentrate on recommitting the efforts of the G20 to accomplish the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a platform, the EdWG has allowed the G20 member countries to come together and prioritize multilateralism, share solutions that encourage growth, remap development plans, and accomplish the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (MEA, 2022).

However, there is still a long way to go before India achieves its goal of providing universal access to early childhood care and education (Lukonga, 2020). Many children about to start the first grade have yet to attend preschool, which causes them to fall behind during the first few weeks of school. To bridge this education gap, the Vidya Pravesh Program, a play-based school readiness program that lasts for three months and is designed for children entering grade I, was introduced on July 29, 2021. This program is intended to serve as an interim measure for implementation at the beginning of the first grade. The primary focus should be on providing children with a warm and inviting environment

and assisting them in acquiring the fundamental skills necessary to successfully adjust to the environment and learning opportunities exhibited by primary schools. All states and union territories (UTs) have successfully implemented Vidya Pravesh in 2022–23 and 2023–24 (NCERT, 2021; 2022a).

A lack of infrastructure, teacher preparation, and a social undervaluation of early childhood physical education are some of the difficulties that must be overcome to successfully integrate physical literacy into the foundational stage (Carl et al., 2023). Despite the many benefits that it offers, there are additional challenges that must be overcome. To find solutions to these issues, educators and legislators must regard physical literacy as an essential component of the core curriculum and give it the highest importance.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Physical activity-based is recognised as a pedagogical approach in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings before formal schooling; however, it is not similarly applied in primary school contexts. The implementation of the Australian School Curriculum (ACARA, 2011) emphasises content and assessment, leading to a decline in opportunities for play and learning, even in the non-compulsory Foundation year. This shift is resulting in an increase in teacher-directed and didactic instructional methods to meet content requirements and adhere to assessment and accountability standards. This chapter provides an overview of historical and contemporary perspectives on physical activity-based play as a context for learning, emphasising the relationship between play, imagination, and active learning in early childhood and care education (ECCE). An analysis of selected contemporary Australian ECCE policy and curriculum documents examines perspectives on play-based learning during children's transition to school in Queensland, Australia. The discussion concludes with the implications for teaching, emphasising the necessity of pedagogical continuity and the implementation of play-based learning to enhance motivation and facilitate active learning in diverse classroom settings. The discussion posits that the context is not binary; rather, it involves integrating playful and imaginative pedagogies with other deliberate teaching strategies to enhance outcomes for all children.

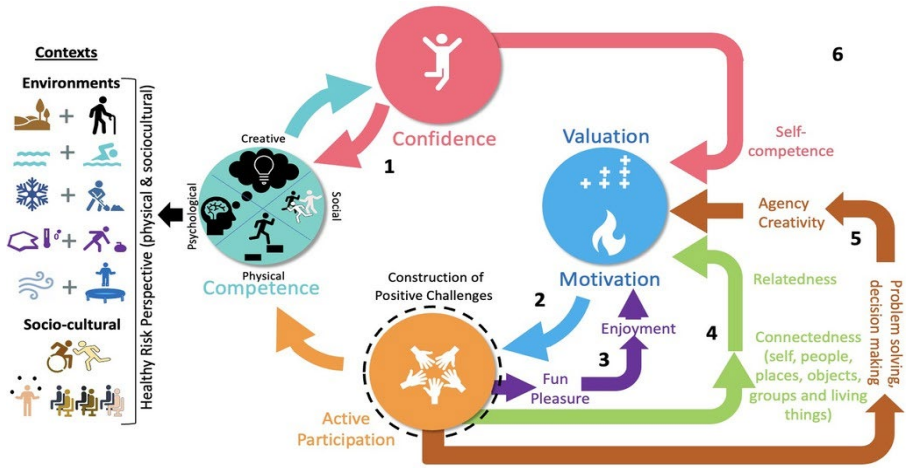

Figure 4 Physical Literacy-Based Pedagogy

Source: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sports-and-active-living/articles/10.3389/fspor.2023.1185680/full

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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