



Research Paper

## A Custodian of Dance and Movement: An Analysis Based on NEP 2020 & NCFSE 2023

Dr. Sharbari Banerjee

Musicologist

Department of Education in Arts & Aesthetics

NCERT, New Delhi

**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the significance of Dance and Movement within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023. It highlights how arts education—particularly dance—serves as a crucial tool for holistic development, cultural literacy, and aesthetic awareness in children across all stages of schooling. The discussion outlines the attributes of dance, its pedagogical importance, the curricular goals at foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages, as well as interdisciplinary connections and cultural rootedness. It also reflects on implementation challenges, the role of vocational education, and how dance can be systematically integrated into school curricula to nurture creativity, identity, and national heritage.

**KEYWORDS:** Dance Education, NEP 2020, NCFSE 2023, Movement, Cultural Literacy, Art Education, Pedagogy

Received 15 Feb., 2026; Revised 26 Feb., 2026; Accepted 28 Feb., 2026 © The author(s) 2026.

Published with open access at [www.questjournals.org](http://www.questjournals.org)

### I. INTRODUCTION

Quality in Education is a crucial factor across all curricular areas as it empowers people with knowledge, skills and competencies. It is the basis for the development of individuals which aligns to broader societal development resulting in a thriving cultural environment. The deep rooted cultural ethos seen through different forms of art in our society is a very important aspect of the Indian knowledge system which develops multiple skills and abilities holistically amongst people of all genres.

### II. ART EDUCATION IN NEP 2020 AND NCFSE 2023

Considering many such benefits the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recommended about “Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools: Learning should be Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable, and Engaging”. It has recommended Art Education as a curricular area that has been considered extra - curricular and co-curricular in the past. The directive in the introduction of the document itself states “Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India’s continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of .....national integration, and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country’s rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country, and the world [1].”

Further the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2023 explains “it is very important to receive a multidisciplinary education that includes arts and crafts to ensure the development of all aspects and capabilities of learners”. Accordingly owing to such recommendations Arts has to be treated as a compulsory Curricular Areas in the School Education and literacy.

In NCFSE 2023 section 1.5 “Few thrust areas of Art Education” it has been emphasized upon “Arts are a vast range of creative activities carried out by people in all cultures” – Art Education introduces Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Movement, and Theatre.

- In the Foundational Stage, the Arts contribute towards the sensorial, physical, socio-emotional, aesthetic, and cultural development of young children.
- In the Preparatory Stage, students develop the skills for making art and also develop a curiosity towards local art forms and artists.

- The objective of Art in the Middle Stage is to help students develop an appreciation for the artistic and cultural diversity of their region and other parts of India.
- In the Secondary Stage, students should develop an awareness of the wide scope of applications in the Visual and Performing Arts [2].

So we realize Arts Education is an umbrella which includes all categories of Visual and Performing arts. Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Dance, Movement, Drama, Jewellery, Textiles etc. It is known in school education, Dance is a sought out art form which students love, as it is engaging and vibrant. Children from a very early age love to dance or move in a variety of foot-tapping beat happily. Coincidentally, the education policy laid down by the present government has recommended that dance and movement can be initiated from the foundational stage of school education till the secondary level.

### III. ATTRIBUTES OF DANCE

1. The art form dance, embraces elements like physical activity with aesthetics i.e. movement and dynamism in different styles.
2. Dance is such an overwhelming expression where you embark on a journey to express grace, charm, fluidity with no bindings. Yet when an individual is tutored they learn discipline, values, collaboration, appreciation and aesthetics.
3. Dance enables you to tell stories by depicting varied living and non living objects through non verbal expression like hand gestures, feet movement, facial expressions, synchronisation with rhythm patterns, music, costumes and jewellery, makeup etc. Simultaneously it promotes spirituality, concentration.
4. It has the requirement of planning micro details for a successful presentation.
5. All such elements have made dance a beautiful intangible asset of performing arts, simultaneously enhancing people's competencies.
6. Dance or stylised movement as we may term the action has the capacity to develop many talents and qualities. One of them stands out as fostering a cohesive understanding among diverse communities. This is an essential attribute within the country amongst the 36 states /UTs for promoting appreciation, tolerance and diminishing boundaries.

Hence it is recommended that dance and movement can be initiated from the foundational stage of school education till the secondary level as it has extraordinary merits in every stage of learning.

“The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a transformative initiative to usher India to prepare itself to meet the challenging demands of a 21st century knowledge society. The NCFSE is one of the key components of NEP 2020, that enables and energises this transformation...[1]”

All of us are aware of the neglect and indifference towards different forms of art. Though we find Music and Visual arts in schools (with minimal emphasis) but dance, inspite of students' admiration is absolutely meant for school functions. The psycho motor impact and the depth in the form dance that is rooted to our traditional lineage along with reflection of contemporary times and use of new ideas is absolutely missing in school education. "This paper explores strategies for systematic learning in dance and movement across different stages of school education, as recommended by NEP 2020."

In the section on Art Education (Chapter 6) the introduction is given as: “In the school curriculum, Art Education deals with developing creativity, aesthetic sensibilities, and cultural literacy in all students... This is done through various forms of Visual Arts... music, dance, and movement... traditional, classical, folk, popular, and contemporary styles of creative expression [2].”

### IV. CURRICULAR GOALS AND COMPETENCIES

#### 4.1 Foundation Stage

At the Foundation stage (ages 3-8) the curricular goals envisions an integrated approach. “It uses ‘play,’ at the core of the conceptual, operational, and transactional approaches to curriculum organization, pedagogy and the overall experience of the child [2].”

#### 4.2 Preparatory Stage

At the Preparatory level (ages 9 -11) day to day actions and personal experiences can be interpreted in different styles of movement steps to dance sequences through music, rhythms, postures, themes, props, arrangements etc. These evolve to gradual comprehension of mudras, gestures, and postures with personal experiences, emotions, and imaginations. Exposure to local and regional forms of dance also enhances knowledge of their own country and people.

#### 4.3 Middle Stage

The Middle Stage (12 -14) in dance education aims to further evolve to greater understanding and application of artistic elements, processes, and techniques. The movements of the body in different geometric shapes, rasas,

musical tunes and rhythmic patterns etc. Further exposure and critical thinking to interpret various local and regional forms of Dance and Movement is also a unique goal.

#### **4.4 Secondary Stage**

The secondary stage in the education of dance intends to incorporate refinement in techniques of a particular dance form and Movement and simultaneously incorporates ideas and elements from various genres of Indian Dance and Movement (traditional, popular, contemporary) into their own repertoire. The four years have to be utilised to train the students formally in any one form of classical dance. Hence, the total years of experience aims to expose the students to different elements of dance, bring out the hidden talents and inner potential, subsequently nurturing them systematically.

*We shall now discuss some sections of NCFSE 2023 and also NEP 2020 to comprehend how the art forms like dance need to be implemented in the total curricula of schools to enhance quality in education. NCFSE 2023 is an integrated document where each part has been discussed in detail with the aim of practical application in schools [2].*

### **V. REFERENCES OF DANCE & INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

#### **5.1 Emphasis on Disciplinary Exploration**

In 2.2.3.3 there is Emphasis on disciplinary exploration

“Understanding these forms and acquiring the relevant practices enables the students for a deeper exploration of aesthetic experiences [2].”

#### **5.2 ECCE – Section 1.1**

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is generally defined as the care and education of children during this period, from birth to eight years. The first eight years of a child’s life are truly critical and lay the foundation for lifelong well-being and overall growth and development across all dimensions — physical, cognitive and socio emotional. The pace of brain development in the first eight years is more rapid than at any other stage of a person’s life. Research from neuroscience informs us that over 85% of an individual’s brain development occurs by the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation in a child’s early years to promote sustained and healthy brain development and growth. The most current research also demonstrates that children under the age of 8 tend not to follow linear, age-based educational trajectories. It is only at about the age of 8 that children begin to converge in their learning trajectories. Even after the age of 8, the non-linearity and varied pace continues to be inherent characteristics of learning and development; however, up to the age of 8, the differences are so varied that it is effective to view the age of 8, on average, as a transition point from one stage of learning to another. In particular, it is only at about the age of 8 that children begin to adapt to more structured learning [2].

#### **5.3 Section 1.5.2.5 – Music and Movement**

“Music is joy. Music is also a strong stimulant for brain development and the formation of synaptic connections. So, following the rhythm, playing simple musical instruments, and singing should be encouraged. Body movements can accompany claps or rhythm played on any basic musical instruments that children or teachers can handle. This helps in sound exploration along with synchronised body movement with music . This is the first step to learning dance . Opportunities to engage in activities like dancing, singing, reciting rhymes, folk songs or action songs lay the foundation for developing a sense of laya, which progresses towards understanding basic talas and exploring various rhythmic interpretations.” Exploration of varied sound sources, songs with different moods, contexts, and languages for children to listen to and perform have a phenomenal impact on the development of a child [2].

#### **5.4 Importance of Dance and Movement in Early Development**

It is with the above recommendations we realise how dance or movement can be effective for the development of each child . All the merits that have been given for the development of children in the above three sections are pointers to it. All of us have observed children like to dance freely enjoying each move and passively getting into the structured beat. Similarly hands and feet movement gradually acquire the right direction , pose and become mudras or pada sanchalan techniques. Engaging students in such movements enhances their concentration level invigorating critical thinking and analysis . Gradually they observe different types of movement around, the astute expressions of varied living beings from the birds to animals to different human beings which they imitate and correspondingly spin stories . All these are capacities of human beings which have been characteristics of the discipline Dance . It has revolutionised the spectrum and it is high time we incorporate the same in school Education which requires holistic and integrated knowledge harmoniously [2].

### **5.5 Inspirational Note**

While implementing different elements in school education we have to remember the sayings of the great bard  
“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information  
but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

— Rabindranath Tagore [3]

### **5.6 Section 1.4 – Curricular Goals and Competencies**

Let us now move further to read about Curricular goals and competencies recommended in the documents  
Section 1.4 – Curricular Goals and Competencies

In the domain of aesthetic and cultural development

CG-12 -- Develops abilities and sensibilities in Visual and Performing Arts and expresses their emotions through art in meaningful and joyful ways

C-12.2 Explores and plays with own voice, body, spaces, and a variety of objects to create Music, role-play, Dance, and Movement

C-12.5 Communicates and appreciates a variety of responses while creating and experiencing different forms of art, local culture, and heritage [2]

### **5.7 Dance and Movement (Curricular Goals)**

The curricular goals of Dance and Movement in school education in different stages of Education recommended are;

#### **Foundation Stage**

At the Foundation stage (for children between ages 3-8) the curricular goals envision an integrated approach. “It uses ‘play,’ at the core of the conceptual, operational, and transactional approaches to curriculum organization, pedagogy, time and content organization, and the overall experience of the child” [2].

#### **Preparatory Level**

At the preparatory level (for children between ages 9 -11) day to day actions and personal experiences is interpreted in different styles of movement steps to dance sequences through rhythms, postures, themes, props, musical instruments , expressions , arrangements etc. These evolve to gradual comprehension of mudras, gestures, and postures with personal experiences, emotions, and imaginations. Exposure to local and regional forms of dance is also mandatory.

C-2.1 Creates and practises Dance and Movement sequences based on everyday actions and personal experiences

C-2.2 Compares and contrasts movements, rhythms, postures, themes, and expressions in a variety of Dance and Movement styles introduced in the classroom

C-3.1 Makes choices while working with movement steps, instruments, costumes, and arrangements used in Dance and Movement

C-2.2 Connects elements of Dance and Movement (mudras, gestures, and postures) with personal experiences, emotions, and imaginations [2]

#### **Middle Stage**

Understands and applies artistic elements, processes, and techniques. The Middle Stage (for children between ages 12 -14) in education aims to further evolve to greater understanding and application of artistic elements, processes, and techniques. The movements of the body in different geometric shapes , rasas , musical notes and rhythmic patterns etc. Further exposure and critical thinking to interpret various local and regional forms of Dance and Movement is also a unique goal.

C-4.1 Demonstrates familiarity with various local and regional forms of Dance and Movement [2]

#### **Secondary Stage**

Curricular Goals - Secondary stage - Develops their Art practice through the knowledge of a wide range of Indian Art forms. The secondary stage (for children between ages 15 -18) in the education of dance intends to incorporate refinement in techniques of a particular dance form and Movement and simultaneously incorporates ideas and elements from various genres of Indian Dance and Movement (traditional, popular, contemporary) into their own repertoire. The four years will be utilised to train the students formally in any one form of classical dance.

C-3.2 Reworks ideas and methods of expression used in Dance and Movement from the Stage of planning to the final performance and reviews the entire process

C-3.1 Extends explorations and refines techniques in Dance and Movement through regular practice and rehearsals

C-3.2 Incorporates ideas and elements from various genres of Indian Dance and Movement (traditional, popular, contemporary) into their own artwork [2]

### **5.8 Summary of Curricular Goals (NEP 2020 & NCFSE 2023)**

- In the school curriculum, Art Education deals with developing creativity, aesthetic sensibilities, and cultural literacy in all students.
- Art Education in schools should give all students adequate opportunities to openly express their ideas and feelings through a variety of art forms.
- When they create artwork together and work collaboratively, they recognise one another's strengths and develop deeper connections with the world around them.
- Such a process nurtures empathy, appreciation, cooperation, and trust, all of which are fundamental for developing social and human values, such as ahimsa, love, compassion, friendship, and peaceful co-existence.
- It recognises the vast diversity of cultural expressions that exist across the length and breadth of India. Local art and cultures would be the starting point for Art Education in all Stages of school education.
- Narrative based educational methods
- Experiential learning --acquiring knowledge through direct experiences and subsequent reflection
- This approach aims to develop an understanding among Teachers and students that the Arts are around us as an integral part of our lives and an essential subject for students in all Stages of education [2]

### **5.9 References of Dance in Different Activities and Curricular Areas in School**

- a) As inseparable part of Indian culture there is reference of Dance forms like different forms of martial arts (e.g., kalarippayattu), and folk dances even in Physical Education and well being -Pg 155 [2]
- b) "Marking important days through community service as part of school culture and practices help build cultural values such as seva, ahimsa, and shanti. Regular music and dance performances at the school assembly help promote pride in India's rich cultural heritage.." – Pg 161 [2]

### **5.10 Knowledge of Dance Across Other Curricular Areas**

Inter relation of dance forms with other art forms and also curricular areas (AIL)

Learning of Languages: Compositions in Art ..... aspects in aesthetics of form, style, and content. Using art to access ideas, to represent feelings and events along with descriptive writing would only enhance the connection to the learning and the expression of the students interesting. Interdisciplinarity of approach in the understanding of Language and expression ,e.g., Utsara in Assamese textbooks talks about various festivals in the state of Assam and various dance and art forms linked to the festivals. The content should also have a diversity of experiences from writers from all walks of life. For example, contemporary Janapada Geete and Janapada Kathe in Kannada literature). Using activities in Language classes as springboards to a conversation (and as energisers) can improve the experience of Language learning significantly. Pg 249 [2]

CG-5 Understanding scientific principles through phenomena in other subjects – e.g. use of muscles in dance form (Pg 303) [2]

## **VI. PEDAGOGY ACROSS STAGES**

Across stages Art Education focusses on:

- Thinking, making, and appreciation.  
Exposure to artists from their own community as well as those from different parts of India.
- Treasures of Indian Knowledge system - Knowledge and appreciation of art traditions and unique approaches and artwork help them appreciate the richness and beauty of thought and expression across cultures
- This helps them realise that multiple perspectives and interpretations can coexist in their own classroom so the same would hold true for society too.
- The 'making' process lends itself to the inculcation of values. e.g. making string puppets and then playing with them to perform a variety of actions to narrate a story requires practice and hard work, while also being a joyful experience.
- As students work with a variety of art forms and techniques, they will develop an appreciation for hard work and an understanding of the time, effort, and practice required to achieve quality artwork.
- With such experiences, students would develop respect for all kinds of vocations, professions, and work, as well as respect for all people.
- The value of liberty and freedom is best experienced when students create and express themselves openly through their artwork. [2]

### **6.1 Foundational Stage**

Pedagogic strategies for this Stage must ensure Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for all children as this forms the basis of all further learning.

Exposure to rich aesthetic and cultural experiences through art, crafts, music, dance, stories, and theatre would enable sound overall cognitive development.

Classroom Transactions will incorporate the varied

- i) Trajectories (Paths) of IKS for Indian Dance
- ii) common issues on nurturance and practise of dance [2]

### **6.2 Preparatory Stage**

students are expected to observe their local art and culture and practise basic art forms puppetry, folk songs, folk dances, and so on [2].

### **6.3 Middle Stage**

students are expected to learn simple artistic processes that are associated with different art traditions and expand their knowledge of artists and art forms across their state and neighbouring states. They are also expected to draw comparisons regarding the stylistic features and social contexts of various art practices and architectural features of the region [2].

### **6.4 Secondary Stage**

students are expected to broaden their art exposure to art traditions from different parts of India and analyse the similarities and differences, and the possible causes due to geographical or social contexts. They will also help them to apply this knowledge into their own art practice as they refine their crafting techniques and ideation skills.

Class discussions, projects, and activities could include comparisons between different regional styles of music or dance or temple construction, so as to bring out not only their common, pan-Indian features rooted in the classical texts, but also their substantial regional variations.

Scholarly work of the past – Sanskrit textbooks like *Natyashastra* have to be introduced to the student with a brief and general introduction to understand the significance of dance since the ancient times [4]

- It is recommended to have Music and Dance Performance circles in schools -4.44 NEP2020[ 1]
- Virtual Reality and Augmented reality in Dance – Digital Media Platforms are a necessary part in dance education. That is why QR codes have been embedded in all textbooks of art education. Similarly, a lot of exposure can be given to students from the Middle stage through virtual classrooms to initiate cultural exchange programmes [2].

## **VII. CULTURAL ROOTEDNESS IN NCFSE 2023**

NCFSE 2023 has laid great emphasis on Cultural rootedness. It considers the discourses of our lineage in arts as icons of Identity, Nationalism and Heritage. The following has been recommended [2].

At the Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages, each Curricular Area takes a specific approach to embed rootedness in India based on the nature of the subject:

Art Education draws from ancient Indian texts such as the *Natyashastra*[4], *Abhinaya Darpanam*[5], *Shilpashastra*[6], *Vastushastra*[7], *Chitrasutra*[8], and *Sangita-Ratnakara*[9], which have codified and structured the elements, methods, and aesthetic principles of the arts.

- Through different Stages, students will develop knowledge of these elements and principles and a vocabulary of the arts used to describe and discuss artwork and their processes, e.g., *sruti*, *naada*, *raaga*, *taala*, *laya*, *bhaava*, *alankaar*, *nritta*, *natya*, *pramaana*, *saahitya*, *gamak*, *meend*, *rasa* [2].
- These concepts are to be introduced in such a manner that the student can experience them and experiment with them [2].
- This will help students understand the unparalleled diversity and multicultural ethos of Indian artistic traditions through a consistent and meaningful engagement with local art, crafts, music, dance, theatre, puppetry, textile art, and so on [2].

### **2.3.1 School Culture and Practices (NCFSE – Pg 167)**

- A student who may experience shyness, stage fear, or any other kind of discomfort with their own body can express their experiences and challenges during the process of learning Dance and Movement. [2]
- This develops greater understanding among students and respect for all people regardless of their capacities and background. Such processes also allow all students to feel included as equal contributors in the learning process [2].

## VIII. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### 8.1 Canonical and Practical Principles in the Present-Day Scenario

The Indian subcontinent is vast, and diverse in every sphere. The geographical features are different and so the culture varies. Also due to the political frameworks diverse in different regions, there is a distinctive difference in the socio-economic condition. Hence in spite of ample potential of people the exposure and facilities are limited and has its impact on the overall development of society and especially education.

Keeping in mind the above situation, there are some solutions which can be implemented in the education of arts or dance. We find a dearth in the availability of teachers and trainers in different schools. E.g. a school in the southern states of India may be able to employ classical dance teachers whereas in a state like Arunachal Pradesh folk dances have a supremacy. One has to understand this diverse culture.

In the first place students must be made aware of the local culture. Then move ahead from local to regional and then national or further global. NEP 2020 has a rationale recommendation. In Sec 22 Promotion of Indian Languages, Arts and Culture NEP 22.9 it is stated:

“Outstanding local artists and craftspersons will be hired as guest faculty to promote local music, art, languages, and handicraft, and to ensure that students are aware of the culture and local knowledge where they study. Every higher education institution and even every school or school complex will aim to have Artist(s)-in-Residence to expose students to art, creativity, and the rich treasures of the region/country [1].”

## IX. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND DANCE

There is another scope for promoting dance through the Vocational Programmes. It is stated in NEP 4.26 – “Every student will take a fun course, during Grades 6–8, that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational craft.....[1]”

All students will participate in a 10-day bagless period sometime during Grades 6–8 where they intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, potters, artists, etc. Similar internship opportunities to learn vocational subjects may be made available to students throughout Grades 6–12, including holiday periods.

Vocational courses through online mode will also be made available. Bagless days will be encouraged throughout the year for various types of enrichment activities involving arts.

## X. CONCLUSION

To make a child understand rasa or aesthetic experience in which “The Arts in every space and time gives a sense of ‘newness’ by inspiring to experience the world differently through innovative expressions.”

- Actions related to children’s own ways that are unique, enjoyable, and thought-provoking.
- Motivation for Innovative and Creative expression by using a variety of approaches (using traditional approaches and implementation in contemporary practices). Restoring the tradition of age old classical form of arts.

So let us all strive hard to succeed in the implementation of recommendations which has systematically laid down ground rules to support the rich talent of students and nurture them.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- [2]. National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi.
- [3]. Rabindranath Tagore. Quotation: “*The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.*”
- [4]. Natyashastra. Classical Sanskrit treatise on performing arts, attributed to Bharata Muni.
- [5]. Abhinaya Darpanam. Classical text on dance and acting, attributed to Nandikeshvara.
- [6]. Shilpashastra. Ancient Indian treatises on sculpture, crafts, and artistic principles.
- [7]. Vastushastra. Classical Indian texts on architecture and spatial design.
- [8]. Chitrasutra. Ancient Indian treatise on painting and visual aesthetics.
- [9]. Sangita Ratnakara. 13th-century Sanskrit text on music and dance by Śārṅgadeva.