

Unveiling the Essence of Modern Pre-school Education: Navigating Pancha Kosha to Embrace New Learning Paradigms

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the integration of the Pancha Kosha framework, inspired by ancient Indian philosophy, into contemporary pre-school education. This framework conceptualizes human existence through five layers (koshas) - physical, vital energy, mental-emotional, intellectual, and bliss. The Panch Kosha framework offers a holistic approach to comprehensive development of young learners. This paper examines the philosophy, pedagogy, and objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 in the context of pre-school education. The implementation of the Pancha Kosha framework involves teacher training, curriculum designing, creating a conducive physical environment, incorporating mindfulness and yoga practices, nurturing emotional development, promoting experiential learning, integrating arts and music, engaging parents, continuous assessment, collaboration, and research. By adopting the Pancha Kosha framework, pre-schools can create a nurturing educational environment that fosters the multidimensional growth of children, preparing them for a lifetime of learning and well-being. Pancha Kosha (Pancha means five and kosha means sheath) encompasses five bodies (koshas) of consciousness: Annamaya (food body/physical body), Pranamaya (vital sheath/prana/life force), Manomaya (the emotional body/mind), Vijnanamaya (cognition/ intellect/wisdom), and Anandamaya (bliss). Pancha Kosha framework is considered as the 'most useful springboard for modern scientific understanding of cosmology and evolution.' (Goswami, 2000, p. 114). This article explains the theory and the attributes of various sheaths and draws implications related to pre-school education.

INTRODUCTION

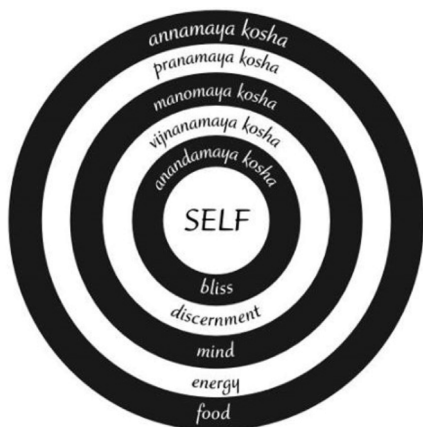
Education is a transformative process that shapes the future of individuals and societies. The National Education Policy 2020 advocates the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities (both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving), but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. The pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa),

and truth (Satya) has been considered as the highest human goal in the Indian Philosophy. The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as a preparation for life in this world, but acquisition of knowledge for the complete realization and liberation of the self. (National Education Policy, 2020). The paper aims to analyze the philosophy, pedagogy, and objective of the New Education Policy 2020 in the context of pre-school education.

In the realm of pre-school education, where

young minds are beginning to bloom, it is crucial to establish a strong foundation that nurtures holistic development. One approach that holds significant potential in this pursuit is the concept of Pancha Kosha, derived from ancient Indian philosophy, which emphasizes the multidimensional nature of human existence. By integrating this holistic framework into the contemporary educational landscape, we can create an environment that promotes comprehensive growth of pre-schoolers to help them unlock their true potential. This paper delves into the integration of the ancient Indian philosophical framework known as Pancha Kosha into contemporary pre-school education. Drawing inspiration from this framework, which portrays human existence through five layers (koshas) - physical, vital energy, mental-emotional, intellectual, and bliss - a comprehensive approach is proposed for fostering holistic development of young learners.

The paper examines the underlying philosophy, pedagogy, and goals of the National Education Policy 2020 within the realm of pre-school education. The implementation of the Pancha Kosha framework entails various components: teacher training, curriculum design, creating an optimal physical setting, incorporating mindfulness and yoga practices, nurturing emotional development, advocating experiential learning, infusing arts and music, engaging parents, ensuring continuous assessment, encouraging collaboration, and promoting research.



Source: <https://inyoganow.com/2014/04/yoga-in-relation-to-panchakosha/>

The Five Koshas: Unveiling the Layers of Learning the Pancha Kosha framework introduces the concept of five koshas, or layers, that play a vital role in the holistic development of an individual. These koshas are Annamaya Kosha (physical sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (vital energy sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mental-emotional sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosha (intellectual sheath), and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath). Pre-school education, through its holistic approach, should address each kosha to ensure comprehensive development.

Annamaya Kosha: (Nurturing the Physical Domain): The Annamaya Kosha refers to the physical body and its needs. Pre-schools should provide a nurturing environment that encourages physical activities, healthy eating habits, and gross motor skill development. Engaging children in age-appropriate exercises, and outdoor play, and fostering an understanding of personal hygiene are integral aspects of this process.

Pranamaya Kosha: (Cultivating Vital Energy): Pranamaya Kosha encompasses the vital energy that sustains life. Pre-schools must integrate practices such as yoga, mindfulness exercises, and breathing techniques to help children develop self-regulation, emotional well-being, focus and concentration. By nurturing their energy levels, pre-schoolers can enhance their overall cognitive and emotional capacities.

Manomaya Kosha: (Nurturing Emotional Intelligence): The Manomaya Kosha represents the mental and emotional aspects of an individual. Pre-schools should create a safe and supportive environment where children can express themselves, learn emotional regulation, and develop empathy. Storytelling, art therapy, and social-emotional learning programs can help cultivate emotional intelligence in pre-schoolers.

Vijnanamaya Kosha: (Engaging the Intellectual Mind): The Vijnanamaya Kosha pertains to the intellectual sheath, encompassing cognitive development, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Pre-schools should focus on stimulating curiosity, promoting active exploration, and fostering a love for learning in young learners. Hands-on activities, inquiry-based learning, and exposure

to diverse subjects can enhance the intellectual development of pre-schoolers.

Anandamaya Kosha: (Nurturing Inner Joy and Fulfilment): The Anandamaya Kosha represents the innermost layer of bliss and fulfilment. Pre-school education should aim to create an atmosphere that encourages a sense of wonder, joy, and creativity. Opportunities for imaginative play, artistic expression, music, and dance can help children express their unique identities and connect with their innate sense of joy.

In the context of pre-school education, as outlined by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), the process of learning goes beyond the mere accumulation of facts. It encompasses the holistic development of each child. This philosophy finds its resonance in the concept of Pancha Kosha from the Taittiriya Upanishad.

The Pancha Kosha represents five dimensions of a child's growth: Annamaya Kosha, linked with physical maturation; Pranamaya Kosha, fostering bodily awareness; Manomaya Kosha, nurturing emotional and spiritual growth; Vijnanamaya Kosha, stimulating intellectual advancement; and Anandamaya Kosha, facilitating a connection with the transcendent.

The NCF emphasizes the need to design specific activities that facilitate the nurturing of these Koshas. Physical well-being is promoted by laying emphasis on a balanced diet, traditional games, mindful breathing practices, regular exercise, and yoga. The development of other dimensions is supported through activities that encourage energy retention, concentration, observation, experimentation, as well as the cultivation of values such as love, gratitude and compassion.

Reflecting on the historical context, it is noted that during the colonial era in 1835, British influence sought to erode India's rich intellectual heritage. However, the NCF underscores the scientific basis of India's traditional knowledge. The Pancha Kosha concept emerges as a pertinent tool for fostering positivity and harmonious engagement with the universe, particularly in the early childhood phase.

Under the purview of curricular goals, the NCF emphasizes instilling a sense of reasoning in pre-schoolers. This is to be achieved through

direct classroom engagements, interactive discussions, and age-appropriate readings. Indirectly, language and literature content can incorporate deliberations that address ethical and moral principles. This encompasses values such as patriotism, sacrifice, non-violence, truth, righteous conduct, forgiveness, tolerance, empathy, equality, and fraternity.

By nurturing these foundational ethical principles, the NCFSE 2023 (National Curriculum Framework for School Education) aims to imbue children with traditional Indian values such as Seva (selfless service), Ahimsa (non-violence), Swachhata (cleanliness), Satya (truth), and Nishkam Karma (selfless action). Additionally, stress has been laid on respecting women, elders, and all individuals irrespective of their backgrounds. Emphasis has also been laid on fostering an appreciation for the protection of the environment.

The NCFSE 2023 also underscores the importance of promoting constitutional values among young learners. These values encompass inculcating a democratic outlook, commitment to liberty and freedom, equality, justice, and fairness, embracing diversity, plurality and inclusion, humaneness and fraternal spirit, social responsibility, unity and integrity of the nation, and a sense of pride in India's heritage whilst maintaining a forward-looking approach and a growth-mindset for continual progress.

In this comprehensive approach, the NCFSE 2023 acknowledges the significance of memory, drawing from ancient Indian wisdom. Contrary to misconceptions about rote learning, the emphasis on Smriti (memory) aligns with the current cognitive science research, which highlights the pivotal role of memory, both working and long-term, in cognitive processes and comprehension.

Implementation of Pancha Kosha Framework to Promote Holistic Development in Pre-Schools

Implementing the Pancha Kosha framework to foster holistic development of pre-school learners in India requires a thoughtful approach in keeping with the unique cultural context and the specific needs of young learners. Some key steps that can be undertaken to integrate this framework into pre-school education are as follows:

- **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** To effectively implement the Pancha Kosha framework, it is essential to provide comprehensive training and professional development opportunities for pre-school teachers. Teachers should be familiarized with the philosophy and principles underlying the framework. They should be well-acquainted with practical strategies required to integrate Pancha Kosha into their daily practices.
- **Curriculum Design:** It is necessary to develop a curriculum that aligns with the Pancha Kosha framework, encompassing activities, and experiences that address the physical, energetic, emotional, intellectual, and blissful dimensions of learning for pre-schoolers. The curriculum should provide a balance between structured learning and child-initiated exploration, thereby, fostering curiosity, creativity, and self-expression.
- **Physical Environment:** Emphasis should be laid on creating a safe, stimulating, and child-friendly physical environment that facilitates holistic development of learners. Classrooms and outdoor spaces that encourage movement, exploration, and sensory experiences should be designed meticulously. It is important to incorporate natural elements, age-appropriate resources, and materials that stimulate the senses and promote engagement.
- **Mindfulness and Yoga Practices:** Mindfulness and yoga practices should be introduced as integral components of the daily routine. Simple breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, and yogapostures suited to pre-schoolers should be incorporated into the lessons. These practices can help children develop self-awareness, emotional regulation and focus, whilst promoting their overall well-being.
- **Emotional Development:** Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes should be integrated into the curriculum to promote children's emotional development of the learners. Stress should be laid on nurturing skills such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and problem-solving through age-appropriate activities, storytelling, role-playing, and cooperative games. It is important to create a positive and inclusive classroom environment that promotes respectful interactions and communication.
- **Experiential Learning:** Hands-on, experiential learning opportunities should be provided to the children to encourage them to explore and discover the world around them. Engaging activities such as nature walks, field trips and visits to community spaces must be organised for developing critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in young learners.
- **Arts, Music, and Movement:** Emphasis should be laid on integrating arts, music, and movement activities into the curriculum to foster creativity, self-expression, and imagination. Children should be engaged in storytelling, dramatic play, visual arts, music, dance, and movement-based activities. Collaboration and appreciation of diverse cultural expressions should be encouraged.
- **Parental Engagement:** Parents should be involved as partners in their child's education. Parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and seminars should be conducted regularly to share information about the Pancha Kosha framework, its implementation, and the importance of holistic development. Parents should be encouraged to support their child's learning at home. Opportunities should be provided to the parents to participate in school activities.
- **Ongoing Assessment and Reflection:** It is essential to regularly assess and reflect on the effectiveness of the Pancha Kosha framework implementation. A combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods should be used to evaluate children's progress across the different dimensions of holistic development. Feedback should be gathered from teachers, parents, and students for refining and improving the implementation process.
- **Collaboration and Research:** Emphasis should be laid on encouraging collaboration among pre-schools, educators, researchers, and policymakers for sharing best practices, experiences, and research findings related to the implementation of the Pancha Kosha

framework. School teachers and educators should be engaged in ongoing research and evaluation to assess the long-term impact of the framework on children's holistic development.

- **Holistic Development:** Schools should lay emphasis on the holistic development of children by nurturing their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Focus should be on creating a balanced curriculum that integrates academics, arts, sports, yoga, and meditation.
- **Individualized Approach:** Pre-schools should recognize the unique abilities, talents, and learning styles of each child. Teachers should strive to create a supportive environment that caters to the individual needs and interests of students, allowing them to explore and discover their potential.
- **Integral Curriculum:** The curriculum at pre-schools should encompass a wide range of subjects and activities, including languages, mathematics, sciences, arts, music, dance, and drama. It should be designed in such a way that it fosters creativity, critical thinking, and self-expression. Emphasis should be laid on incorporating mindfulness practices and abilities based on character development into the curriculum.
- **Community Involvement:** The school needs to be actively engaged with the

community. The students should be encouraged to participate in community service activities. This involvement fosters a sense of social responsibility, empathy, and a broader understanding of the world.

It is important to note that the effective implementation of the Pancha Kosha framework may vary across different schools and educational institutions. By implementing the Pancha Kosha framework in pre-schools in India, we can create a nurturing educational environment that recognizes the multi-dimensional nature of children's all-round development. This approach will foster their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth, setting the stage for a lifetime of learning, well-being, and fulfillment.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary educational landscape in pre-school should embrace the Pancha Kosha framework to promote holistic development of learners. By addressing the physical, energetic, emotional, intellectual, and blissful aspects of young learners, pre-schools can create an enriching environment that lays the foundation for lifelong learning. Integrating practices such as yoga, mindfulness, social-emotional learning, and hands-on exploration can help unlock the true potential of pre-schoolers, enabling them to become well-rounded individuals who are well-equipped to thrive in the world.

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