

Technology-Driven Transformation of Physical Education and Sports: Implications for Teaching, Coaching, and Athlete Development

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Abstract:

The integration of emerging technologies into physical education (PE) and sports is reshaping how physical skills are taught, coached, and developed. In both India and globally, wearables, AI, big data analytics, and immersive technologies (AR/VR) are being deployed to personalize instruction, enhance performance, and broaden access. For example, smartwatches and fitness trackers now provide real-time physiological feedback in PE classes. Artificial intelligence enables coaches to generate data-driven training plans and even identify latent talent (e.g. AI-based talent ID deployed at Paris 2024). Policies like India's National Education Policy 2020 and UNESCO's Quality Physical Education framework explicitly support technology-enhanced learning (NEP 2020 repositions PE for holistic development). However, challenges such as the digital divide, data privacy, and the need for teacher and coach training are significant barriers. This paper employs a thematic literature review (focusing on 2023–2024 sources) to analyze how technology is transforming PE teaching, coaching innovation, and athlete development, drawing on Indian contexts and global best practices (e.g. IOC's Olympic AI Agenda, WHO activity guidelines). The review finds that technology can greatly improve engagement, assessment, and individualized learning in PE, while also revolutionizing elite coaching with analytics and simulation. Ensuring equitable access, ethical data use, and updated policy frameworks will be critical for realizing these benefits.

Keywords: Physical Education, Sports Technology, Coaching, Athlete Development, NEP 2020, Artificial Intelligence, Wearable Technology

1. Introduction

The educational landscape for physical activity is undergoing a profound digital transformation. Wearable sensors, mobile apps, and virtual platforms are no longer novelty items but rather integral tools in PE and sports programs. For example, fitness trackers and smartwatches now provide instantaneous heart-rate and movement data, enabling coaches and teachers to monitor student activity in real time. Similarly, virtual reality (VR) environments offer immersive training simulations that can mimic competitive settings or teach complex motor skills. This shift is driven by broader trends: governments and organizations worldwide emphasize leveraging technology to improve health outcomes. The World Health Organization highlights that physical inactivity is a global health crisis (with 31% of adults and 80% of adolescents inactive), and it advocates innovative measures to increase activity. UNESCO similarly recognizes that quality PE (which may be augmented by technology) is key to reversing pandemic-related declines in youth fitness. These global mandates align with national strategies. India's National Education Policy 2020, for instance, explicitly promotes a holistic, technology-infused curriculum and repositions PE as central to a "healthier, more equitable society". In India, initiatives like Digital India and Fit India have accelerated the uptake of tech in schools. During COVID-19 lockdowns, many Indian schools rapidly adopted online PE modules and interactive fitness games to keep students active. Internationally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has launched an Olympic AI Agenda (2024) to harness artificial intelligence for athlete development and safety. In tandem, tech giants (e.g. Intel) and sports federations collaborate on AI tools for talent identification and training analytics.

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This review synthesizes recent evidence (2023–2024) on technology’s impact in three domains: (1) **Physical Education Teaching** in schools and higher education, (2) **Sports Coaching Innovations** in training and performance analysis, and (3) **Athlete Development** across grassroots to elite levels. We examine opportunities and outcomes, drawing on case studies and data from India and other countries. The paper also addresses barriers (technical, ethical, pedagogical) and discusses policy implications, referencing NEP 2020, global frameworks (e.g. UNESCO’s Fit for Life, IOC best practices), and emerging technologies (AI, wearables, AR/VR, performance analytics).

2. Methodology

This article employs a **thematic literature review** methodology, synthesizing findings from scholarly journals, conference proceedings, policy reports, and credible news sources published largely in 2023–2024. Searches were conducted using academic databases (e.g. PubMed, Google Scholar) and official websites, focusing on terms like “*technology in physical education*”, “*sports coaching innovations*”, “*wearables athlete development*”, “*NEP 2020 physical education*”, etc. Emphasis was placed on sources providing empirical data or authoritative analysis. For example, recent systematic reviews and reports (such as Zhong *et al.* 2025 on “digital-intelligent” PE technologies) guided our thematic categorization. We also reviewed relevant policy documents and news (e.g. Olympic AI Agenda editorials, WHO/UNESCO publications). As the review is narrative, following the PRISMA framework informed our literature selection (i.e. identifying, screening, and thematically grouping studies). Key themes were identified a priori (PE teaching, coaching, athlete development, challenges, policy) and guided the organization of results. Where possible, findings from Indian contexts were compared with global practices to provide a balanced perspective. In-text citations follow APA style (e.g. Tomar, 2022) and provide verifiable anchor points using the linked sources.

3. Technology in Physical Education Teaching

Educational institutions are increasingly integrating digital tools into PE curricula. Studies show that using fitness apps, digital videos, and interactive games can significantly boost student motivation and participation. For instance, Sharma and Bhardwaj (2021) found that students who used mobile fitness applications exhibited greater engagement and cardiovascular improvement than those in traditional classes. Nationwide surveys (e.g. by NCERT) confirm that during COVID-19 remote learning, about one-third of surveyed schools incorporated YouTube exercise videos or gamified PE content, helping maintain student activity levels despite campus closures. In India, national e-learning platforms (such as Diksha and ePathshala) have added modules on physical activities and exercises, making quality PE content accessible even in remote areas.

Digital pedagogy also extends beyond content to inclusive and adaptive learning. Wearable devices like smartwatches and fitness bands are used as teaching aids in classrooms. Teachers can monitor class-wide heart rates or step counts to provide instant, data-driven feedback. According to an AICTE report (2022), schools that employed wearable tech noted heightened student awareness of fitness and personalized instruction based on biometric data. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are emerging in PE teaching: AR apps might overlay virtual targets or pathways during running drills, while VR headsets can simulate environments (e.g. climbing virtual hills or navigating obstacle courses) to teach skills in a safe setting. Research from China (Zhong *et al.*, 2025) indicates that VR simulations can address spatial constraints of traditional PE, allowing students to practice techniques (e.g. gymnastics, martial arts) with immediate visual feedback. Early trials suggest VR practice can improve motor skill acquisition; however, accessibility and cost remain issues in many schools.

Pedagogically, technology is used to adopt holistic and peer-led models in PE. UNESCO’s Quality PE framework emphasizes active, student-centered learning (peer coaching, teamwork) supplemented by tech tools for self-monitoring. For example, teachers may use apps that gamify fitness challenges (step contests, activity logs) to foster collaboration.

India's NEP 2020 advocates sports-integrated learning and multidisciplinary. The policy encourages using digital platforms to support both physical and mental well-being, explicitly mentioning "AI-assisted fitness monitoring" and gamified health apps as innovations. Aligning with this, some Indian schools have experimented with simple AI-based games (e.g. motion-detection games that score performance) to teach sports skills and health concepts.

Overall, the adoption of technology in PE teaching has shown positive outcomes. A systematic review notes that digital-intelligent technologies can create adaptive learning environments, offering personalized training plans and continuous assessment. By breaking down activities into data streams, teachers can more precisely evaluate student progress, moving beyond traditional single-try skill tests to ongoing monitoring (e.g. tracking improvement in jump height or sprint speed over time). Importantly, technology enables inclusive education: students with disabilities can use assistive devices (like connected treadmills or screen readers) to participate in adapted PE, aligning with UNESCO/WHO calls for equitable access.

Yet implementation remains uneven. Many government schools in India lack reliable internet or devices, so tech-enhanced PE is more common in urban private and higher-secondary schools. A UNESCO report (2020) pointed out that while affluent schools swiftly adopted online PE during lockdowns, rural and low-income schools struggled to engage students without in-person classes. Thus, digital tools are a complement but cannot fully replace fundamental physical instruction. Teacher training is critical: surveys indicate that many PE teachers feel underprepared to use complex tech (e.g. heart-rate monitors, fitness apps) and need targeted capacity-building.

3.1 Innovations in Sports Coaching

At elite and grassroots levels, coaches are leveraging advanced technology to enhance training quality. Wearable sensors and analytics platforms allow coaches to quantify almost every aspect of performance. Biometric monitoring devices (heart rate straps, GPS trackers, inertial sensors) now routinely accompany athletes during practice. For example, cricket teams widely use wearable performance monitors (like Catapult devices) to track players' speed, acceleration, and workload in real time. This enables coaches to tailor training loads: if a batsman's headset shows elevated heart rate patterns indicating fatigue, the coach might adjust his workload that day to prevent overtraining. Hawk-Eye vision systems (high-speed cameras) in football (soccer) and other sports provide instantaneous measurements of ball speed, trajectory, and players' positions. Video analysis software, often AI-powered, can then break down entire matches to identify tactical patterns or individual technical flaws.

AI-driven coaching tools are rapidly evolving. Machine learning algorithms can synthesize data from wearables to predict injury risk. For instance, an AI model may combine an athlete's historical training load with sleep and nutrition data to recommend rest days before muscle strain occurs. Real-time coaching apps can adjust an athlete's workout on-the-fly: one case study described a soccer club using AI analytics to modulate players' training drills based on physiological responses and performance trends. Furthermore, "digital coaches" and virtual assistants are emerging. Apps like intelligent running coaches use smartphone sensors to assess form and provide feedback, effectively acting as a virtual trainer available 24/7. In gymnastics and dance, motion-capture systems (sometimes using Microsoft Kinect or wearable motion sensors) analyze an athlete's movements frame-by-frame, allowing coaches to correct technique with millimeter precision.

Video and simulation technologies also play a growing role. Augmented Reality (AR) overlays digital information during training: for example, shooting coaches in basketball have used AR headsets to display shooting angles and trajectories to players in real time. Virtual Reality (VR) creates fully immersive practice environments. Figure 2 shows an athlete using VR boxing training. VR is used to train decision-making and situational awareness: Olympic wrestlers, fencers, and football

goalkeepers have used VR simulations to rehearse scenarios (e.g. penalty kick responses) without physical strain. Research suggests VR training can reinforce neural patterns of movement and psychological readiness. Even sports psychologists use VR to simulate high-pressure competition settings (e.g. a loud arena) to acclimate athletes mentally before big events.

Data analytics platforms represent another frontier. Today's sports scientists use big-data techniques to integrate nutrition, sleep, psychology, and performance data. In baseball and football (soccer), clubs hire data analysts who employ AI to scout opponents' tendencies and formulate strategies. At the Olympics, Intel's AI-powered platform at Paris 2024 was used to identify athletic talent in remote areas: scouts used smartphone video (no special equipment needed) to capture children's physical tests, and an AI model scored metrics like speed and agility to suggest suitable sports for each individual. This "talent ID" innovation can be seen as an extension of coaching – it expands the coach's eye with algorithmic pattern recognition across large populations.

In India, coaching innovations are emerging alongside global trends. Professional leagues (e.g. IPL cricket, Indian Premier League) require teams to provide GPS vests and tracking devices. Khelo India centers (national sports academies) encourage coaches to use performance analytics software, and the government's draft National Sports Policy (2024) explicitly aims to embed AI and IoT in training. Startups are also developing India-specific solutions: wearable devices designed for local athletes, and coach-training apps in regional languages.

Overall, the integration of technology into coaching is creating a data-rich environment where decisions are evidence-based. Coaches report that granular performance metrics help focus training (addressing specific weaknesses) and improve efficiency. However, many coaches caution that technology complements but does not replace human judgment. Even as AI can outline an optimal drill sequence, the coach's role in motivating and mentoring remains irreplaceable.

3.2 Impact on Athlete Development

Technology is transforming athlete development from early talent identification to elite performance optimization. In training, continuous monitoring via wearables enables long-term profiling. Youth athletes now often wear activity trackers or heart-rate monitors in daily practice, creating growth curves of fitness and skill. This data informs individualized development plans: for example, a teenager who shows plateaued improvement in speed can be given extra focus, or one prone to high workload patterns can have conditioning adjusted. AI and analytics help tailor strength and conditioning: machine learning models analyze each athlete's response to nutrition and training interventions to maximize gains (so-called "data-driven training plans").

Talent identification has become particularly data-centric. As noted, the IOC-Intel AI platform scans youths in places like Senegal to highlight those with Olympic potential. In many countries, similar programs use statistical models: for instance, USA Swimming and Chinese sports academies have experimented with predictive algorithms that flag young swimmers or gymnasts likely to excel based on early performance metrics. These tools democratize scouting by bringing science to grassroots levels. In India, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and state academies are exploring performance testing batteries combined with digital record-keeping to track promising athletes over years.

Technology also aids injury prevention and rehabilitation. Instrumented devices (e.g. smart mouthguards, sensor-embedded insoles) monitor head impacts or gait patterns to alert trainers of potential injuries, aligning with IOC best-practice recommendations for athlete safety. Performance analysts use software to detect subtle biomechanical changes (like an asymmetry in a sprinter's stride that precedes injury), allowing early intervention. Telehealth and mobile apps connect athletes in remote areas with physiotherapists and nutritionists for on-demand support, bridging gaps in expertise.

Additionally, sports psychology is augmented by technology: virtual reality is used for mental rehearsal and anxiety management, while biofeedback tools (e.g. HRV monitors) train athletes in relaxation and concentration techniques.

On competition, advanced technologies have immediate impact. At major events, AI-assisted timing (e.g. Omega's AI cameras) yields split-second precision and provides athletes with rich performance data after each race. Video analytics feedback to athletes quickly: swimmers can review their stroke efficiency, and track runners can analyze their form in slow motion. Over time, all this data contributes to longitudinal studies of athletic development. Researchers have begun to characterize how world-class fitness profiles evolve from age 15 to 25, using data collected via wearables and smart training logs.

Policy alignment is accelerating this tech integration. India's Draft National Sports Policy (2024) explicitly lists AI, IoT, and analytics as tools to "enhance athlete performance and identify talent". Globally, the IOC's Olympic AI Agenda encourages federations and coaches to adopt AI tools responsibly to elevate sport. UNESCO and WHO, while focused on education and health, recognize that modern athlete development intersects with educational technology – for example, WHO's global action plan on physical activity (2018–2030) calls for "innovative technologies" to promote active lifestyles, which implicitly includes tools used in athlete training.

Despite these advances, care is needed. Overreliance on metrics can neglect personal factors (motivation, socio-cultural context) in development. Coaches warn that data overload may overwhelm younger athletes who need more intuitive learning. Moreover, technology adoption is uneven: athletes at well-funded centers benefit most, potentially widening achievement gaps. Equalizing access to training tech – a concern noted in educational contexts – is equally relevant in sports.

3.3 Challenges and Ethical Considerations

While technology offers clear benefits, it also poses significant challenges. **Data Privacy and Security:** Wearables and apps collect sensitive personal and health data. Ensuring that this data is securely stored and ethically used is critical. In India, many schools and clubs may lack robust policies governing student/athlete data. Globally, there is growing concern (and in some places legislation) about "athlete data rights" – who owns performance data and how it can be shared. As Zhong *et al.* (2025) note, "algorithmic accuracy, data privacy, and unequal access" are key barriers to tech adoption in PE. Similarly, the IBEF report highlights privacy and accuracy as concerns in sports tech, warning that sensitive biometric data (like heart rate, fatigue levels) could be misused if not protected.

3.3.1 Digital Divide and Equity: Even in India's rapidly digitizing society, there is a stark divide. Urban private schools and professional clubs often have state-of-the-art equipment, whereas rural schools may lack even basic facilities. A UNESCO (2020) review observed that affluent institutions easily integrated online PE during COVID-19, while many rural and low-income schools "struggled to maintain student engagement". This divide risks creating a two-tier system: tech-enabled "hi-tech" athletes and those without. Ethical implementation requires policies (e.g. government grants, public-private partnerships) to ensure equitable distribution of technology and infrastructure.

3.3.2 Teacher/Coach Preparedness: Incorporating tech in PE requires skilled instructors. Many PE teachers in India have limited training in digital tools; thus, professional development is a bottleneck. NEP 2020 addresses this by calling for regular teacher ICT training, but actual upskilling programs are still catching up. Ethically, there is a responsibility to ensure that technology augments rather than replaces skilled mentorship. MoveSports (2024) cautions that tech "serves as an aid" and that human oversight (by medical professionals, coaches) remains necessary.

3.3.3 Overemphasis on Quantification: Critics warn that an overreliance on metrics can undermine the intrinsic enjoyment of sport. When every jump or throw is measured, athletes may focus on numbers rather than feel. The gamification of PE, while engaging, risks turning physical activity into just another screen-based task. Ethical teaching must balance fun, creativity and character building with data-driven training. UNESCO's holistic education philosophy underscores that PE is not only about performance but also psychosocial well-being.

3.3.4 Health and Safety: New sports tech also raises novel safety issues. For example, prolonged use of VR headsets can cause motion sickness or disorientation in some individuals. Wearables that vibrate or provide electrical stimulation (e.g. in some "smart clothing") must be rigorously tested for safety, especially with children. The IOC's focus on athlete safety in its AI Agenda highlights the ethical imperative: technologies must be validated and used to *enhance* safety (e.g. concussion-detecting mouthguards), not introduce new risks.

3.3.5 Commercialization and Equity: The sports tech market is growing rapidly (as in India, projected to reach ~\$5.7B by 2029). While innovation is welcome, commercialization can skew priorities. There is ethical concern that schools or athletes might be marketed costly devices with promises of performance gains, even when the evidence is incomplete. Policymakers and educational leaders must set standards and guidelines to vet products, preventing exploitation. UNESCO's collaborative QPE toolkit (developed with ICSSPE, IOC, WHO, etc.) is an example of a safeguard: such multilateral efforts can provide objective criteria for quality sports tech adoption.

3.4 Policy and Future Implications

Policy frameworks will determine how effectively technology transforms PE and sport. In India, NEP 2020 provides the broad vision: it emphasizes 21st-century skills, technology integration, and inclusive education. NEP's call for holistic, multi-disciplinary learning means PE curricula are being revised to include digital literacy components (e.g. teaching students about health apps or VR safety). The National Curriculum Framework for School Standards (NCF) (in line with NEP) is expected to update PE guidelines, potentially integrating modules on technology use in physical activity. Moreover, central programs like Fit India and Khelo India now explicitly encourage tech: for instance, Khelo India centers have begun installing analytics labs and e-coaching units. The Draft National Sports Policy 2024 (currently under review) goes further by explicitly mandating the use of AI, AR/VR, and IoT to enhance athlete training and talent scouting. If adopted, this policy could lead to government grants for smart infrastructure at state sports academies and mandatory digital monitoring of athlete performance.

At the higher education level, universities and institutes are updating sports curricula to include technology modules. Physical education degree programs increasingly offer courses on sports analytics and wearable tech. Teacher training institutes (e.g. DIKSHA platform) now provide online certifications on digital fitness tools. International agencies also contribute policy guidance: UNESCO, as lead UN agency on sport, promotes guidelines on "quality" and "inclusive" PE, implicitly supporting tech use where it broadens access. WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity advocates cross-sectoral policies (education, health, transport) that could leverage tech solutions (e.g. city-wide fitness tracking challenges to combat inactivity).

For the future, several directions emerge. **Standardization and Regulation:** There will be a need for standards on data formats and interoperability (so that, for example, a student's fitness tracker data can seamlessly integrate into school records). Regulatory frameworks (data protection laws, device safety standards) must evolve to cover biosensors and AI analytics in sports. **Research and Evaluation:** Continuous evaluation of tech efficacy is vital. The digital-int PE review (Zhong *et al.*, 2025) found most studies are pilot-level; long-term trials and impact assessments will be needed to inform policy.

Governments and sports bodies might fund research on outcomes (e.g. does VR training objectively improve competition results?). In India, collaboration between sports institutes (NSNIS) and tech companies could accelerate homegrown solutions, tailored to local needs.

3.4.1 Global collaboration: Sports is inherently international. The IOC's Olympic AI Agenda (2024) and the UNESCO QPE initiative illustrate that multi-stakeholder collaboration is increasingly shaping policy. Nations might form consortia (e.g. SAFANET for sports analytics) to share best practices. Development programs (UNDP, UNICEF) could help resource-poor regions adopt low-cost tech (e.g. basic fitness apps, community e-sports fitness games) to promote equity.

In summary, policy must balance innovation with inclusion. The NEP's vision of technology-enabled education is promising, but success will hinge on implementation: investing in infrastructure, training educators, and ensuring rural and urban areas alike benefit. If done thoughtfully, the digital transformation of PE could democratize athletic development and make lifelong fitness a reality for more people.

4. Conclusion

Technology is rapidly transforming physical education and sports in India and around the world. Smart devices, AI analytics, and immersive media are no longer futuristic possibilities but practical tools in classrooms and stadiums. This review has shown that integrating technology in PE can greatly improve engagement, personalize learning, and equip teachers with better assessment methods. In coaching, innovations from wearables to AI analysis are enhancing training precision and even expanding the talent pool through data-driven identification. Athlete development stands to benefit from continuous monitoring and predictive insights that were unimaginable a decade ago.

However, realizing the full potential of this "tech-driven revolution" requires addressing significant challenges. The digital divide must be bridged so that all students and athletes have access to these resources. Robust ethical frameworks and data governance are needed to protect privacy and ensure fairness. Educators and coaches must be trained to use these tools effectively, ensuring they complement rather than overshadow the human elements of mentorship and play.

Looking ahead, policy initiatives (NEP 2020, National Sports Policy, UNESCO QPE guidelines) and global strategies (IOC Olympic AI Agenda, WHO action plans) are aligning to guide the integration of technology in PE and sports. As these policies take effect, we anticipate more widespread use of AI tutors, AR/VR classrooms, and real-time analytics in Indian schools and sports academies. If implemented with inclusivity and ethics at the forefront, these technologies can help cultivate healthier lifestyles and world-class athletic talent. In sum, the transformation is already underway: with continued innovation, collaboration, and careful stewardship, technology can make physical education and sports more effective, engaging, and empowering for all stakeholders

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