A Study of Prevalence of Yoga Education in Schools

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Abstract

Yogic practices are important for every human being, especially for children not only for gaining physical fitness, but also to develop learning, memory and dealing with stress and anxieties in children. The commencing of yoga education in school curriculum has been emphasised as a follow-up of the International Yoga Day, announced by the General Assembly in 2015. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to study the implementation of yoga in schools through a study of the status of different yogic activities conducted in schools of KVS, NVS, CBSE and other schools of Delhi. The findings of the research reveals that, a bulk of Indian schools have acknowledged and incorporated yoga and yogic practices as a part of their core curriculum, and dedicated a separate period where student can practice yoga and its allied practices. Still, in order to make precise scrutiny of the effect of yoga on school going students, a certain degree of standardisation has to be brought about.

Introduction

Yoga is the ancient Indian science that has attracted the attention and interests of Indians and foreigners alike. Because of the widespread benefits and implications of *yoga* in the physical and mental health of humans, it is being seen as a branch of science. This is evident in the form of increasing scientific literature in the field. The positive effects of *yoga* on physical and mental health are well known and well-researched, and over the past few decades, the

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implication of *yoga* and associated practices on health are being viewed as a form of alternative intervention. *Yoga* has many benefits on the physical, mental and spiritual level, and is believed that yogic influences of the mind on the body are much more powerful than those of body on the mind.

Several reports have established a clear connection between *yoga* (and *yogic* practices) and concentration and problem-solving abilities of students. These studies have reported that school going children in India who practice *yoga* regularly performed better in academics. It was also found that stress was directly related to poor academic performance. In the current academic scenario of our nation, where students are hard-pressed for time and are taught a very detailed curriculum at school, many students find it difficult to cope up studies in the pressure. This shows in the form of poor academic performance and personality changes. Therefore, inclusion of *yogic* practices at school level is necessary so that the students can reap the benefits of *yoga* and associated practices.

About the Initiatives

The National Curriculum Framework, (NCF) 2005, has included *Yoga* as an integral part of Health and Physical Education. As per the NCF, all the three (health, physical and yoga) should be taken together rather than adopting fragmentary approach. Both *yoga* and physical education contribute to not merely the physical development of the child but have a positive impact on psychosocial and mental development as well. Various studies have shown that yogic practices contribute to the overall development of the child, lead to flexibility and muscular fitness and also correct postural defects among school children (NCERT, 2006). In addition it plays an important role in improving cardio-vascular efficiency and helps to control and reduces excessive body fat while contributing to the overall physical and health related fitness. Apart from contributing to physical fitness, *yoga* also contributes to improving learning, memory and dealing with stress and anxieties in children. Both *yoga* and physical education have not been given the due importance in the school curriculum and neither has their contribution to the health and overall development of the child been adequately acknowledged. The constraints faced in the implementation of *yoga* and physical education are related to a number of factors that affect the quality of school education in general and health and physical education in particular. These constraints include lack of appropriate school environment in terms of physical infrastructure, furniture, lighting, ventilation, water supply, etc., lack of budgetary support, lack of transport services, lack of adequately trained teachers and institutions for their training, lack of proper documentation and

systematic evaluation of the area and lack of coordination between the education and health departments (GOI, 1961). The observations made in the NCF 2005 on Health and Physical Education largely hold true even today, but what we do not have is adequate research in this area, which we feel is indicative of the importance it receives in the policy and research circles.

A study of awareness among teachers of primary and secondary levels in Anna District of Tamilnadu showed a very low level of awareness regarding health promotion measures and was unable to carry out these measures systematically. There was lower awareness among male teachers and those in rural as compared to urban areas (Dhanasekeran, 1990).

Although the number of studies concerned with *yoga* and physical education are very few, the available studies throw some light on the status of this area. As far as physical education is concerned, the available studies show that this area does not get the importance that it should and this gets translated into a negative attitude on the part of the teachers and headmasters of schools. The experience of introducing *yoga* in school curriculum has been quite a mixed experience. There is a tendency for *yoga* to be reduced to mere physical exercise that defeats the very essence of this practice. In the interim period, teachers who are trained in physical education are also getting some training in *yoga* education. It may be worthwhile to review the syllabus and pedagogy of the teacher's training programme offered by different colleges and deemed universities in this area. Although the number of studies concerned with *yoga* and physical education are very few, the available studies have made it clear that *yoga* is an effective costless therapy to promote health and reduce much physiological and psychological disorder (Michelle, 2012).

Objectives of the Study

- To study the implementation of *yoga* in schools.
- To study the status of different *yogic* activities conducted in schools of KVS, NVS, CBSE and other schools of Delhi.

Sample

The total sample of the study consists of 4220 students. Out of these, 481 from KVS, 127 from NVS, 201 from Government school and 3404 from CBSE schools were selected. Table 1 shows the number of schools provided information from various organisations.

Table 1
Number of schools selected as sample

Types of Schools	Total Number of Schools
KVS	481
NVS	127
Government	208
CBSE	3404
Total	4220

Methodology

The questionnaire was prepared and sent to Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Central Board of School Education. These organisations collected the data and sent the data to NCERT. The available data was scrutinised and based on the final data the analyses was done. A simple percentage method was used. Questionnaire was sent to all the KVS and NVS adopting survey method.

Tools

A questionnaire consisting of 16 items was prepared for the school principal. The questionnaire have items related to transaction of *yoga* covering stage, class, timing, types of practices, duration, by whom and teaching aids. Some items were related to NCERT syllabus, training of teachers and assessment.

Data collection details

In this study, data was collected from 4220 schools belonging to KVS, NVS, CBSE and other CBSE affiliated government schools. A detailed questionnaire was drafted in order to gain insights into the various aspects of activities related to *yoga* that were practiced in these schools. This questionnaire was then distributed to KVS, NVS and CBSE affiliated schools, and the filled forms were received and analysed by NCERT.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of schools with yogic activities

More than 4000 schools all across India were included in this study. Out of these, about 11.5 per cent were KVS; 3 per cent were NVS; about 5 per cent were Government schools and the rest were other schools. For exact numbers, please see the Table below.

Table 1
Distribution of Schools having *Yogic* Activities

	Schools having *Yogic* Activities				
	Yes		**No**		**Total Number of Schools**
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
KVS	470	97.7	11	2.3	481
NVS	119	93.7	8	6.3	127
Government	189	90.9	19	9.1	208
CBSE	3322	97.6	82	2.4	3404
Total	4100	97.2	120	2.8	4220

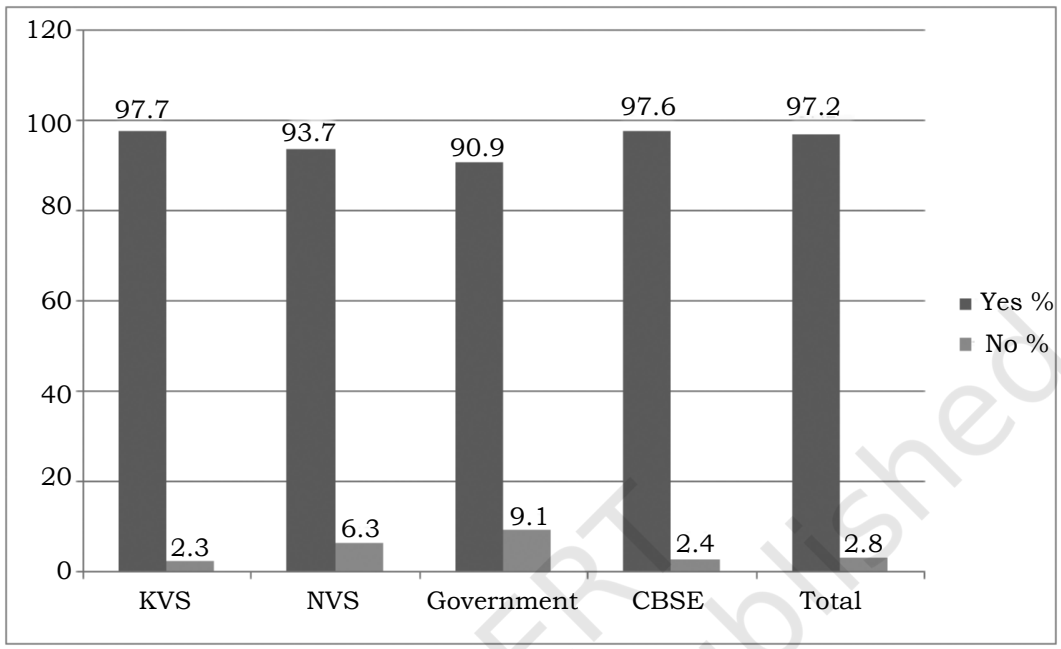


Figure 1: Data showing distribution of Schools Having Yogic Activities

This data clearly shows that a majority of schools have included *yogic* practices in their curriculum. KVS top this list with almost 98 per cent schools having included some form of *yogic* practice for their students. Thus, it is clear that most of the CBSE affiliated schools in India have included *yogic* practices for their students.

Classification of yogic practices in schools

Upon exploring the details of the kind of *yogic* practice that were being practiced in the schools, a classification of yogic practices was made in the questionnaire. Accordingly, responses were collected from schools about inclusion of *Yogasana*, *Pranayama* (breathing practices), *Dhyana* (meditation), *Shuddhi Kriya* (cleansing processes), relaxation techniques and any other *yogic* practice. The analysis of responses for this part of the study are summarised in the Table 3 below:

According to this data, maximum number of schools included *yogasana* (89 per cent) and *pranayama* (90 per cent) as a part of their curriculum, followed by *dhyana* (about 79 per cent) and other relaxation techniques (about 74 per cent). Very few schools (about 20 per cent) included *shuddhi kriyas*.

This can be attributed to the relative ease of learning and teaching the respective *yogic* practices. Since teaching of *yogasana*, *pranayama* and *dhyana* are more easily acquired, cleansing processes usually take a lot

Table 2
Distribution of Schools as per the *Yoga* practices they practiced

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yogasana	429	90.1	121	96.0	186	89.9	2997	88.6	3733	89.0
Pranayama (Breathing Practices)	442	92.9	113	89.7	182	87.9	3036	89.7	3773	90.0
Dhyana (Meditation)	389	81.7	97	77.0	155	74.9	2649	78.3	3290	78.5
Shuddhi Kriya (Cleansing Process)	130	27.3	17	13.5	44	21.3	627	18.5	818	19.5
Relaxation Techniques	374	78.6	80	63.5	151	72.9	2476	73.2	3081	73.5
Any Other	46	9.7	10	7.9	42	20.3	331	9.8	429	10.2

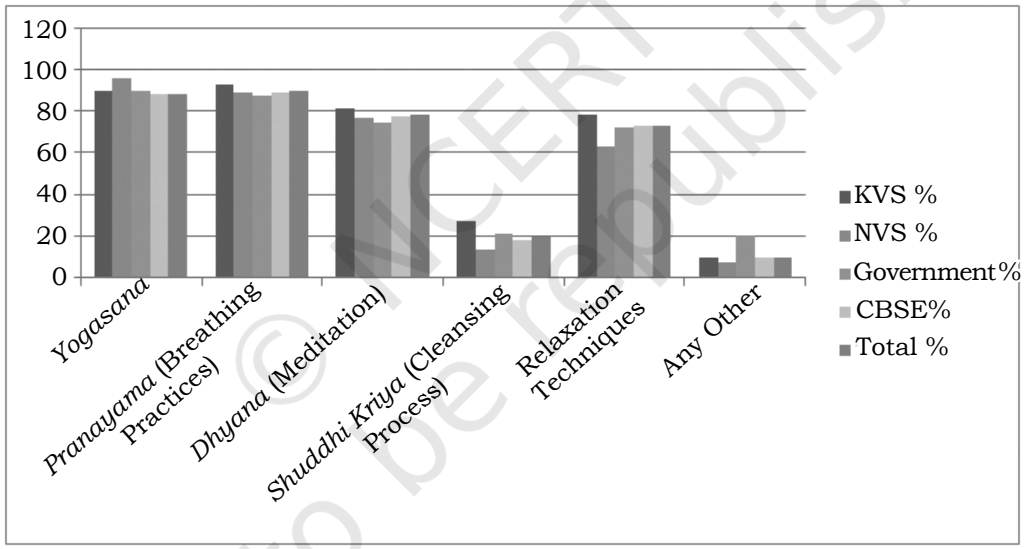


Figure 2: Distribution of Schools as per the Yoga practices they practiced

of time and effort to master the skill. These results could be related to the availability of trained teachers in the respective fields.

Distribution of schools in terms of yoga schedule

In order to probe further about the depth of *yogic* practices followed in the participating schools, the frequency of *yogic* practices was compared among different schools. Schools were classified according to the number of days per week for which *yogic* practices were performed. The results for this part of the study are summarised in the Table 3 below:

Table 3
Distribution of Schools as per their Routine and content of Yoga Classes

	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	Theory	Practical	Theory	Practical	Theory	Practical	Theory	Practical	Theory	Practical
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Daily	34.8	46.1	33.3	32.2	36.4	50.5	17.3	21.1	23.1	25.6
Once a Week	30.4	28.3	16.7	14.9	27.3	29.1	39.5	46.6	35.5	42.8
Twice a Week	26.1	21.1	50.0	45.5	18.2	10.7	28.4	26.1	28.1	25.4
Thrice a Week	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	14.8	6.1	9.9	5.0
Any Other Schedule	8.7	4.6	.0	7.4	18.2	9.7	.0	.0	3.3	1.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

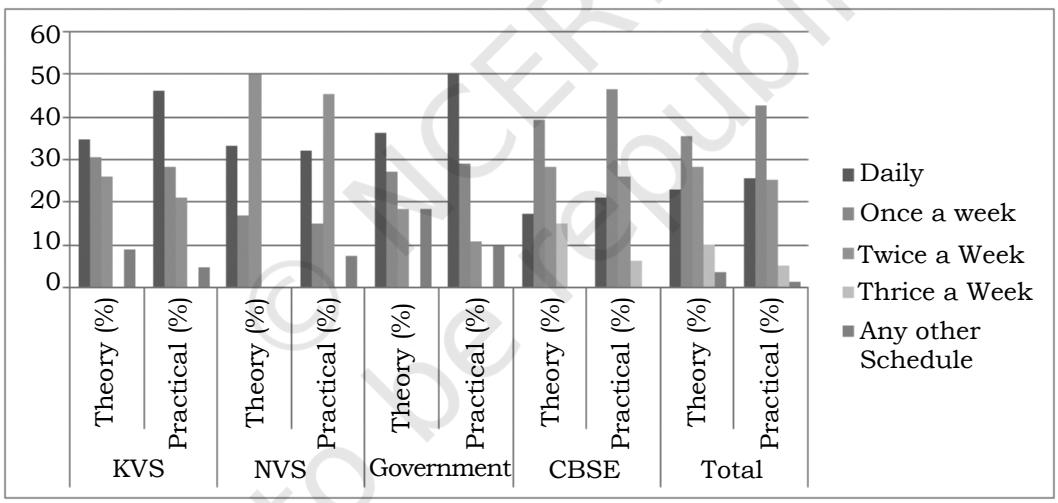


Figure 3: Distribution of Schools as per their Routine a content of yoga Classes.

These results show a high degree of variation among individual categories. For example, although there is a clear dominance of practical *yogic* sessions at schools over theory classes in *yoga* and *yogic* practices, it is evident that there is no uniformity in frequency of *yogic* practices in schools. Even within the same school category, there is no uniformity of frequency of yogic practices. These results highlight a need for uniformity in frequency of *yogic* practices at schools so that the corresponding effects may be realised. In the absence of a uniform *yoga* schedule, it is not

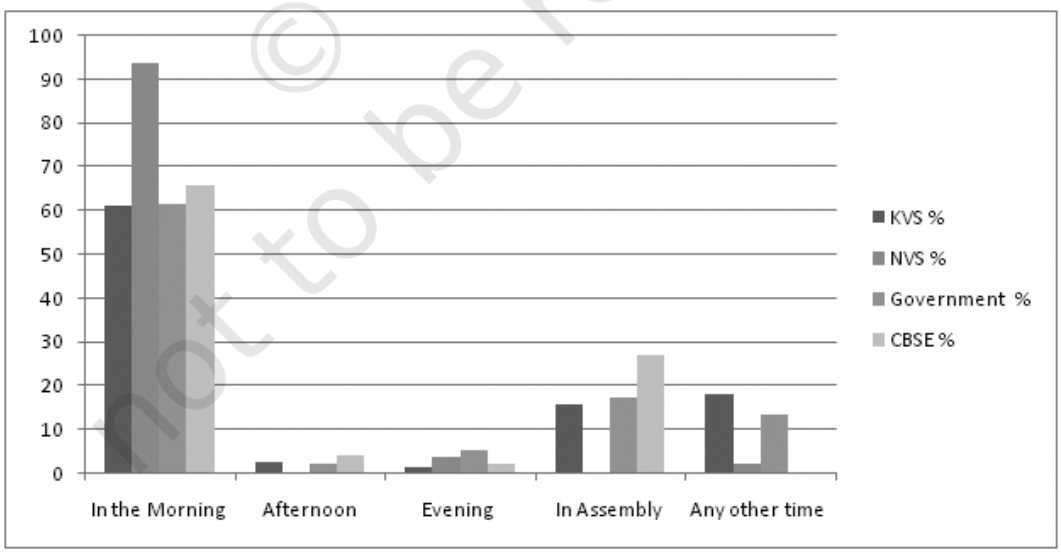
possible to assess and compare the outcome of these practices.

Distribution of schools according to the timing of yogic practices

Within each school category, the timing of *yogic* practices was also identified. While it was clear that majority of the schools (about 66 per cent) included *yogic* practices in the morning, there were considerable variations within each category, except for NVS, where almost 90.6 per cent (65.9 morning and 24.7 in the assembly) of the schools conducted their *yoga* sessions in the morning. For all other categories, the timing of these sessions was varying. The summary of this part of the study is depicted in the Table 5 below.

Table 5
Distribution of Schools as per the timing of Yoga Classes in different type of Schools

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In the Morning	296	61.4	119	93.7	128	61.5	2238	65.8	2781	65.9
Afternoon	14	2.9	0	.0	5	2.4	152	4.4	171	4.0
Evening	7	1.5	5	3.9	11	5.3	83	2.4	106	2.5
In Assembly	76	16.0	0	.0	36	17.3	931	27.3	1043	24.7
Any other time	88	18.3	3	2.4	28	13.5	0	.0	119	2.8
Total	481	100.0	127	100.0	208	100.0	3404	100.0	4220	100.0

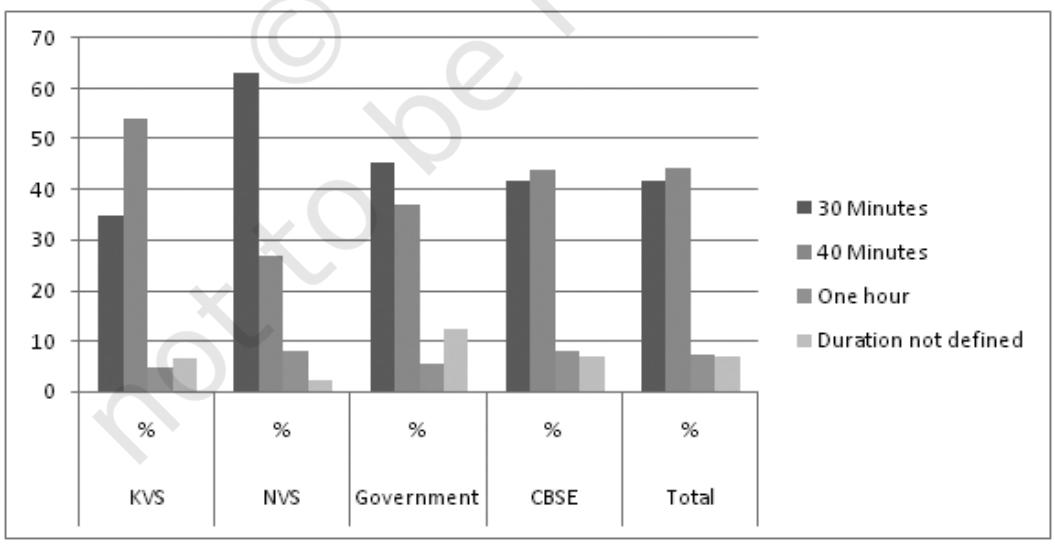


The timing of various *yogic* practices is critical. For *yogasana*, it is vital that students don't have a full stomach and it makes sense to perform these sessions in the morning. However, for the remaining yogic practices like *dhyana* and relaxation, there is minimal impact of empty or full stomach. In order to decipher the effect of various *yogic* practices on students, it is essential to establish guidelines regarding the timing of each kind of *yogic* practice for maximum benefit on students.

Further in line with the timing of *yogic* practices in various schools, it is essential to know the typical duration of each *yogic* practice session. The details regarding this aspect are depicted in the Table 6 below.

Table 6
Distribution of Schools as per the Duration of Yoga Classes in different type of Schools

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
30 Minutes	167	34.9	80	63.0	94	45.2	1418	41.6	1759	41.7
40 Minutes	260	53.9	34	26.8	77	37.0	1492	43.8	1863	44.1
One hour	22	4.6	10	7.9	11	5.3	264	7.8	307	7.3
Duration not defined	32	6.6	3	2.3	26	12.5	230	6.8	291	6.9
Total	481	100.0	127	100.0	208	100.0	3404	100.0	4220	100.0



Most of the schools covered in the study included about 30–40 minutes of *yogic* practice per session. NVS showed a majority of schools (63%) where *yogic* practice session lasted for about 30 minutes. Again, a major point to note in this result is the variation within each category regarding the duration of each *yoga* session held.

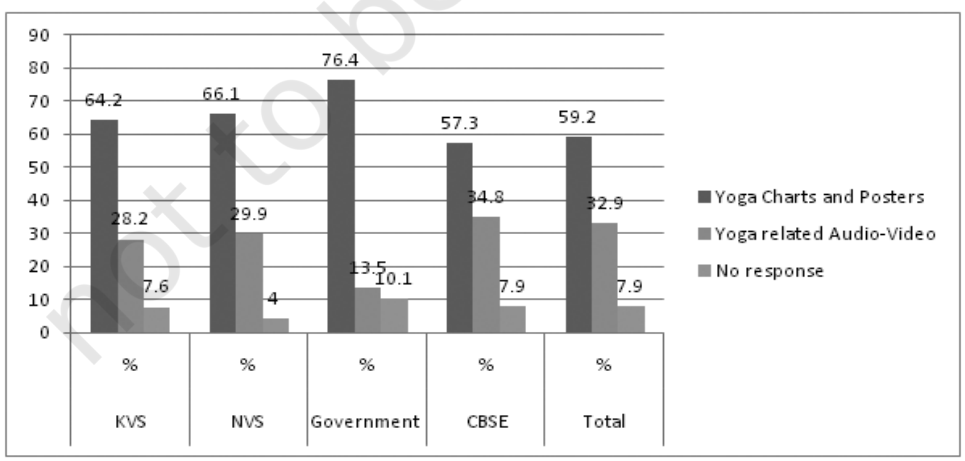
Distribution of schools based on types of teaching aids

Before making a correlation between the timing, duration and effect of *yogic* practices in schools, it is essential to understand the kind of teaching aids that are available at and used by the schools that participated in this study. For this purpose, the participating schools were asked about the type of teaching aids that were being used for *yogic* practices. The following Table 7 summarises the responses.

As is evident by the results, most of the schools within each category are well equipped with teaching aids that comprises of charts, posters, audio and visual aids pertaining to *yoga* and *yogic* practices.

Table 7
Distribution of schools using teaching aids for yogic activities

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yoga Charts and Posters	309	64.2	84	66.1	159	76.4	1949	57.3	2501	59.2
Yoga related Audio-Video	135	28.2	38	29.9	28	13.5	1186	34.8	1387	32.9
No response	37	7.6	5	4.0	21	10.1	269	7.9	332	7.9
Total	481	100	127	100	208	100	3404	100	4220	100

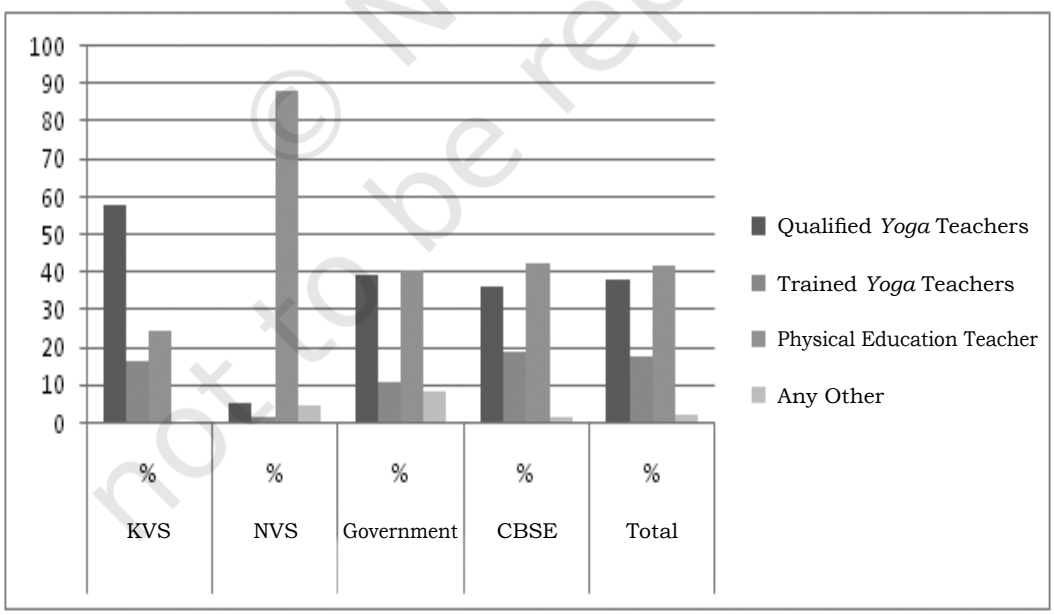


Distribution of schools based on the type of teachers conducting *yogic* practices

Since it is evident that there are ample number of teaching aids available in Indian schools for carrying out *yogic* practices with students, it is essential to know about the teachers who conduct these sessions. For this purpose, the schools were distributed according to the involvement of qualified *yoga* teachers, trained *yoga* teachers, physical education teachers or other teacher to conduct *yogic* practices. The finding related to these aspects is given below in Table 8:

Table 8
Distribution of schools by transaction of yogic practices

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Qualified *Yoga* Teachers	279	58	7	5.5	82	39.4	1237	36.3	1605	38.1
Trained *Yoga* Teachers	81	16.8	2	1.6	23	11.1	650	19.1	756	17.9
Physical Education Teacher	117	24.4	112	88.2	85	40.9	1446	42.5	1760	41.7
Any Other	4	.8	6	4.7	18	8.6	71	2.1	99	2.3



Considerable variation between different categories of schools was seen in this aspect. For example, almost 88 per cent of NVS schools had *yogic* practices conducted by physical education teachers, while the corresponding proportion in KVS schools was just about 25 per cent. In contrast, close to 58 per cent of KVS schools had qualified *yoga* teachers to do the same task. Another aspect that can be observed in this result is that very few schools have *yogic* sessions conducted by trained *yoga* teachers.

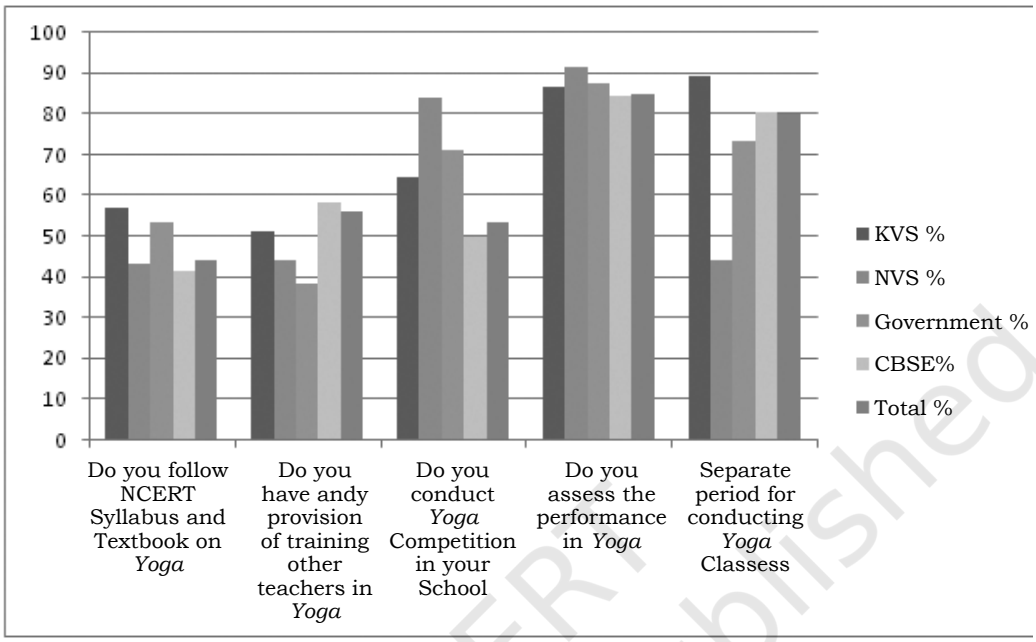
Distribution of schools according to special provisions made under *yoga* practices

As the final part of this study, assessment of the type of curriculum being followed by different schools for *yogic* practices was made. Details were asked about the availability of *yoga* training programs for teachers, assessment and evaluation of students after *yogic* practices, etc. The corresponding results are summarised in the table that follows.

Many interesting outcomes are seen in this section. For example, it is clear that a majority of schools in India have a separate period for conducting *yoga* and *yogic* practices, and the performance of students is regularly assessed in about 85 per cent of the schools that participated in this study. However, less than half of the total school followed a common syllabus for *yoga* and *yogic* practices. Also, only about half of the schools have provision of getting teachers trained in *yoga* and *yogic* practices.

Table 9
Distribution of Schools as per the provisions made under Yoga practices

	Type of School									
	KVS		NVS		Government		CBSE		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do you follow NCERT Syllabus and Textbook on *Yoga*	257	57.0	51	43.2	94	53.4	1316	41.4	1718	43.8
Do you have any provision of training other teachers in *Yoga*	231	51.2	52	44.1	67	38.1	1853	58.3	2203	56.1
Do you conduct *Yoga* Competition in your School	291	64.5	99	83.9	125	71.0	1579	49.7	2094	53.4
Do you assess the performance in *Yoga*	391	86.7	108	91.5	154	87.5	2684	84.4	3337	85.0
Separate period for conducting *Yoga* Classes	403	89.4	52	44.1	129	73.3	2557	80.4	3141	80.0



Conclusion

As a result of this study, it has become clear that a majority of Indian schools have recognised and included *yoga* and *yogic* practices as a part of their curriculum, and dedicated a separate period where student can practice *yoga* and its associated practices. However, there is a huge variation when it comes to the training of teachers who conduct these sessions, the syllabus that is followed for these sessions, and timing or duration of these sessions. In order to make accurate analysis of the effect of *yoga* on school going students, a certain degree of uniformity in these aspects has to be brought about. For example, specific guidelines regarding the timing and duration of *yoga* sessions, special sessions for students who deal with more stress (higher classes, for example), and a congruent line of teaching. Also, it needs to be checked if these *yogic* sessions can be conducted by trained *yoga* instructors or teachers who can be trained in *yoga*. Once these few parameters are addressed, it would be possible to understand the effects of *yoga* in academic performance and positive personality changes in Indian students.

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