

Revival and Integration of Fine Arts in School Education: An Empirical Study of Delhi Middle Schools with Reference to NEP-2020

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Abstract: The paper presents research on the incorporation of fine arts within the middle school curriculum in Delhi and specifically the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The study employed mixed method approach to examine the objectives. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The answers were collected from respondents through a questionnaire. The administrators were interviewed to find out the actual challenges in the operationalization of fine arts in selected schools. The analysis also reveals the most problematic issues, such as the insufficiency of art materials, lack of digital equipment, non-availability of trained educators and the absence of administrative and parental support. In spite of the interferences, there were positive practices that were established, including integration of folk art, art-based learning strategies and platforms to express student creativity. These innovations indicate increased support of the NEP-2020 vision of raising well-rounded individuals and developing socio-emotional skills in addition to academics.

Keywords: Fine Arts Education, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Holistic Learning, NEP-2020

Introduction: India is a land of fine arts having a tradition spanning thousands of years. The culture of the country, religious beliefs and social changes are visible in the history of Indian fine arts. Since the ancient cave paintings, through the modern contemporary art, the people in the world have been inspired by the masterpieces created by Indian artists. It has the fine arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance and literature. All the forms of art have developed over time and have been affected by different cultures and dynasties, religions.

Fine arts are significant in developing learners in a holistic manner. Visual arts, performing arts, music, dance, drama and literature are considered to be the fine arts. These courses make students creative, culturally sensitive and emotionally intelligent. There has been the development of the Indian education system where fine arts have been incorporated at different levels. Arts education has been integrated into the school programs as early as in primary schools, up to universities. Nevertheless, fine arts are not implemented and emphasized in all states and educational boards.

Arts in India, was part of education in the ancient India. Gurukula system involved music, dance, painting and sculpture among other subjects. These arts were taught to students as they were developed. Education was that concept that was holistic and involved intellectual and

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artistic development. Arts were supported by royal courts and learning institutions were established to learn different forms of art. The principles of performing arts were founded in the Natya Shastra which was authored by Bharata Muni. This indicates that the education of arts was even organized at the ancient times.

The education system was transformed during the British rule. The British brought in the western style of education whose primary emphasis was on academic studies. The formal curriculum put a lot of neglect on arts education. The traditional art forms persisted but in an out of the mainstream education system. The British system stressed on the subjects that would be able to produce clerks and administrators in the colonial government. This contributed to the deterioration of the arts education in formal education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is keen on nurturing holistic individuals, and the inclusion of Fine Arts in the curriculum of middle schools stands a great chance of achieving this objective. To achieve this goal, we explored the theoretical basis, the practical application, and the general importance of the inclusion of the Fine Arts into the middle school curriculum.

Review of Literature

History of art education in India shows that there is a consistent conflict between the vision of policy and practice. This was the case in the colonial period whereby formal education heavily depended on the Macaulay Minute of 1835 that favoured literary and scientific education based on the requirements of the administration at the expense of indigenous arts. Arts had been a part of pre-colonial learning - gurukuls and madrasas tended to incorporate music, storytelling and craft as a learning tool - but they were slowly pushed aside. The importance of aesthetic education in the formation of a rounded personality was stressed by the post-independence education commissions and especially the Kothari Commission (1964-66). Nonetheless, the implementation was not even as witnessed by Kantawala (2012) as it continued to be a token hobby with arts being sidelined to annual functions. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) once again called on the need to have art integrated but its influence was watered down by school exams. It is in this historical context that NEP-2020 could be viewed not as a sole reform, but as a continuation on numerous policy efforts of reaffirming the centrality of the fine arts in education - with a more forceful integration mandate this time around.

The multi-dimensional benefits of fine arts have always been highlighted by education theorists. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) by H. Gardner identified the artistic abilities as intellectual vectors unique intelligences of musical, spatial and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligences that needed to be nurtured in addition to the linguistic and logical. Eisner (2002) contended that interaction with arts creates creativity, imagination and ability to read between the lines - which are necessary qualities of adaptive thinking. The same is echoed in Indian studies. Tagat et al. (2025) proved that consistent art activities enhanced empathy, cooperation, and classroom involvement of the students. Such advantages can prove particularly useful in inclusivity especially in the India context where classrooms tend to be characterized by high levels of socio-economic inequality. NEP-2020 explicitly relates art education to life, critical thinking, and socio-emotional learning, and it is one of the key aspects of education in the 21st century.

NEP-2020 does not reflect the previous policies because it integrates arts into the subjects based on Art-Integrated Learning (AIL). According to Prajapati & Pachauri (2025), the conceptualization of art in the policy presents it not as an independent subject, but as a pedagogical instrument that tends to increase the understanding in other disciplines like science, mathematics, and social studies. One can teach concepts of symmetry in mathematics as an example, using a rangoli design, or historical events can be learned as an example, using an enactment of the events in theatre. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has also given instructions where schools are supposed to incorporate the local art forms in their regular classes. This goes in line with the policy focus on experiential education, cultural literacy and breaking down of hard-line subject hierarchies. In the case of Delhi middle school where curriculum time is frequently very tight, this approach within a curriculum is a realistic avenue to open up learning without excessive imposition on schedules.

The need to maintain art education through parents and other stake players in the community is documented. According to Epstein (2018), involvement of parents was found to have a significant positive effect on student motivation in arts programmes. Kumar (2023) also found that in schools of Delhi where the parent-teacher associations were active, more exhibitions, performances, and cultural exchanges were organized in middle schools. NEP-2020 encourages schools to partner with local artists who are in the community and enable students to be taught by practicing artists. The resource constraint is also overcome with the help of this model by utilizing the local cultural capital. The participation of parents can change the attitude of society to the subject that currently has a prejudiced view regarding the priorities of studying and focusing more on exams than on creative development.

Field & Newick (1973) studied the interplay between the arts and the classroom. They set out to study the relationship between art education and school administration using data collected from a sample of schools' pupils, instructors, and administrators. After giving it some thought, they concluded that art education does influence more traditional academic disciplines. Additionally, they reached the consensus that art education serves as the foundation for all other types of education.

Objectives and Research Methodology

The research problem is to examine the present level and application of Fine Art in the middle school curriculum. It would involve looking into the issues of whether Fine Arts are taught as a compulsory or optional subject; time allocated to them and the resources and infrastructure made available in schools to ensure education on arts. Another objective of the study is to examine how Fine Arts can be used to instill creativity and innovativeness among learners. The study employed mixed method approach to examine the objectives. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The answers were collected from respondents through a questionnaire. The administrators were interviewed to find out the actual challenges in the operationalization of fine arts in selected schools.

Table 1 shows the sample distribution of the respondents in four different categories of schools namely Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Delhi Education Department Schools, NDMC Schools and Private Schools. The sample design is such that it is well represented by institutions that are run using various administrative and financial systems.

The study represents a wide spectrum of the middle school system Fine Arts education by incorporating the government-run, centrally-managed and privately-funded institutions to provide an all-encompassing view of the middle school system of Fine Arts education in Delhi. The sample of the study was based on 40 schools, 10 schools of each type of management. This consistency of sampling enables the study to compare and contrast practices in different institutional situations. In these schools, the respondents were classified as three categories which were students, teachers, and parents.

Table 1: Sample Size and Distribution

S. N.	Type of School/Management	No. of Schools	No. of Fine Arts Students	No. of Fine Arts Teachers	No. of Parents of Fine Arts Students
1.	Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV's)	10	100	40	40
2.	Delhi Education Department Schools	10	100	40	40
3.	NDMC Schools	10	100	40	40
4.	Private Schools	10	100	40	40
Total		40	400	160	160

Analysis and Interpretations

Data given in Table 2 offers a summary of the different fine arts activities being offered in the schools surveyed. The observations indicate that the most widespread and offered fine arts activities are music (90 percent), drawing/painting (85 percent) and dance (80 percent). These outcomes suggest that expressive and performance-oriented forms of art play a major role in schools, which can be presented as part of cultural events, contests, and school celebrations.

Table 2: Fine Arts Activities Available in Schools

S. No.	Fine Arts Activity	No. of Schools Offering	Percentage (%)
1.	Drawing/Painting	34	85
2.	Craft	28	70
3.	Pottery	10	25
4.	Textile Art	14	35
5.	Paper Craft	22	55
6.	Woodwork	12	30
7.	Folk Art	18	45
8.	Sculpture	9	22.5
9.	Music	36	90
10.	Dance	32	80
11.	Drama	30	75

A significant number of schools (75 percent) also provide drama, which emphasizes the role of drama in developing the communication skills, confidence, and creativity of students. Craft (70 percent), paper craft (55 percent), are also relatively common, implying that it is seen in schools that they are setting the stages to fine motor skills and imagination. Pottery

(25 percent) and sculpture (22.5 percent) on the other hand are supplied by few schools. The art forms need special space, equipments, and experienced teachers, which could be the reason why these forms were not prevalent. In the same way, woodwork (30 percent) and textile art (35 percent) are less common, maybe because of infrastructural and safety issues.

It is also interesting that folk art is included in a 45 percent of schools because it is an attempt to maintain the traditional arts background according to the priorities of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, where such issues as cultural rootedness and comprehensive education are significant. Based on this distribution, it could be concluded that even though schools are trying to create opportunities in the creative field, the opportunities are not equal in all forms of arts. The mainstream fine arts practices are more common in schools, as opposed to the traditional and craft-based disciplines, which are underrepresented.

Table 3 gives an excellent comprehension of the prevailing situation with regards to resources in the field of fine arts in the middle schools in Delhi against the targets identified by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The general results of the findings are that majority of the schools have fewer and poor resources in order to facilitate effective promotion of fine arts education. The overall average results of all categories are lower than the middle point of 3.0 that indicates the overall deficiency of the quality and availability of the required facilities. The results indicate that there is still the lack of development of the overall resource environment of the middle schools with the focus on the fine arts education in Delhi. Although there have been some attempts to avail basic materials and display facilities, some loopholes still exist especially in integrating technology and accessing reference materials. Above all, to support the vision of NEP-2020, there is an immediate necessity of overriding policy measures, specific funding, and infrastructural assistance that will support the integration and recovery of the role of fine arts in school education.

Table 3: Rating of Resources for Fine Arts in Schools

Resource Category	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)	Mean Score
Art materials and supplies	5	10	15	7	3	2.73
Reference books and visual aids	8	12	12	6	2	2.55
Technology resources (computers/tablets)	15	10	8	5	2	2.25
Display space for artwork	6	8	14	9	3	2.88

Art supplies and materials with a mean score of 2.73 were a relatively good provision as compared to other categories, but still low satisfactory levels. The majority of respondents gave this resource an average rating, with some rating it as poor to show that although the basic materials are available, they are not always enough, or of high quality, to encourage the meaningful creative interaction. The average of 2.55 led to reference books and visual aids implying that there were no sufficient instructional and illustrative resources required to teach and learn art. This handicap negatively affects the capacity of the teachers to combine the theory and practice in art education.

The lowest rating was given to technology resources like computers and tablets, the mean score was 2.25. This is also indicative of a dismal deficiency on the part of the digitalization of the fine arts instruction, although NEP-2020 focuses on learning settings that employ

technologies. The majority of the respondents rated these resources as being very poor and there was a strong need to have digital infrastructure to boost creativity and innovation in classrooms.

Display space of artwork scored 2.88 meaning that it is the highest score among the four categories on a relatively positive note. A large number of schools also have corridors, notice boards or special areas to display the work of students. These exhibitions do not only motivate students, but also cultivate an appreciation of creativity culture to the school at large. Nevertheless, the score does not go up to the level of good, which means that there is still much to be done in regards to the development of well-organized and formalized exhibition spaces.

The findings show that although the level of availability of certain resources is moderate, most schools have difficulties in terms of providing full support to a fine arts education. The resource scarcity in the form of materials, books, and above all, digital resources limits the successful application of the vision of NEP 2020 that seeks to incorporate a holistic and creative way of learning.

Conclusion

The paper brings out conclusions that the subject of fine arts is transformational in developing the holistic development of students in middle schools. When they participate in these activities like music, dance, drawing, drama, and craft, the students not only become creative but also become focused, confident, and have better problem-solving skills. The results clarify it that fine arts play major roles in emotional expression, culture consciousness and social interaction, which increases the learning atmosphere in general.

The study, however, also shows that there are various challenges which limit the total incorporation of fine arts into a school system. The scope of the fine arts education is usually undermined by limited resources, inadequate teacher training, absence of evaluation systems, and institutional low priorities. Academic pressure on students by their parents also narrows the ability of students to engage in creative spheres.

In spite of these obstacles, the fact that positive progress has been found among students shows that there is a great potential of fine arts that can be used to supplement academic learning. In order to fulfill the vision provided in NEP-2020, schools should focus on the allocation of resources, teaching staff training, as well as raising awareness of the parents and administrators. Through dedicated work, fine arts can become not only a peripheral activity, but also one of the key instruments of the educational process, training students to be imaginative, self-assured and culturally grounded members of society.

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