

# Fine Arts in School Education: Issues and Challenges

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the purpose, issues and opportunities of Fine Arts education in Delhi in the middle schools with specific consideration of the reforms that were presented in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The study employed mix method approach using questionnaire. A systematic sample of 40 schools including Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Delhi Government Schools, NDMC Schools and private Schools was taken to have a complete picture. In what can be described as a critical analysis, the major issues that are highlighted to teachers are poor time management, resource level, academic pressure and parental pressure on teachers as well as absence of formal training. The necessity of special facilities, up-to-date resources, online tools, and transparent evaluation criteria were also pointed out by the teachers. The results highlight disconnect between the NEP vision of an interdisciplinary and holistic education and the reality of the ground situation in the implementation.

**Keywords:** Fine Arts Education, Cultural Awareness, Problem-Solving Skills, Holistic Learning, NEP-2020

## Introduction

Education is a key element in shaping the mind of the young learners and equipping them to live in a dynamic, interconnected and global world. To fulfill this objective, the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in our country has opened a new wave of education reforms in the aim of changing the learning environment and facilitating the overall development of students. One of the aspects that require consideration is the introduction of Fine Arts in NEP 2020 in the middle school curriculum. To facilitate the overall growth of the students, including practical exposure, development of creative and critical thinking, problem-solving skills as well as socio-emotional growth, the NEP 2020 can realize the significance in incorporating such an experiential learning in the curriculum. This research paper seeks to discuss the problems of Fine Arts education in the Delhi middle schools and incorporation of the subject in the school curricula. The research paper also seeks to examine the issues that the stake holders, like teachers, management staff etc. are experiencing in applying the concept of Fine Arts integration into the curricula as perceived by the NEP 2020.

## Review of Literature

Dwelling upon the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the subsequent review of the literature on the matter is expected to provide an in-depth review of the existing research and scholarly work related to the subject matter of the importance of Fine Arts at the middle school level. The need of practical learning is discussed in various studies, some of which are

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by Craft and Jeffrey (2008). Practical learning activities like craft-making involve students in learning activities, thinking and development of skills. In these studies, the authors have highlighted the significance of experiential learning in increasing the level of understanding, knowledge retention, and the overall performance of students. There have been studies conducted on Cognitive and Skill Development which have shown that having Fine Arts in the curriculum assists middle school students in their cognitive and skill building. As an example, a study has found that Fine Arts enhances problem-solving abilities, spatiality, hand-eye coordination, and fine motor skills (Pickard, 2018; Sullivan, 2010). These outcomes point to the importance of introducing Fine Arts as a means of stimulating the intellectual growth and the handiness of the pupils.

The literature also focuses on the benefits of Fine Arts to the socio-emotional development of pupils. Creative and practical activities help in self-expression, confidence, teamwork, and perseverance (Bamford, 2006; Fiske, 1999). These studies indicate that introduction of Fine Arts in a middle curriculum will help the children in general development since their mental well-being and social skills are promoted. As study on curriculum integration suggests (Basu, 1997), Fine Arts have been implemented successfully in educational systems in at least several countries. The studies provide data regarding viable strategies, pedagogical concepts, and curriculum frameworks that facilitate the inclusion of Fine Arts in middle school. A sound comprehension of such practises of implementation can determine the development of curriculum standards and instructional strategies to perform effective integration.

The challenges and impediments of teaching Fine Arts in primary schools are also mentioned in the literature. A shortage of funding, insufficient preparation of teachers, time constraints, and difficult evaluation problems are often cited as factors that inhibit the effective implementation (Beavis, 2017). These issues should be recognized and dealt with in case to be able to introduce Fine Arts into the curriculum. The role of art and craft education as one of the elements of a comprehensive and interdisciplinary curriculum is explicitly recognized in the NEP 2020 (Government of India, 2020). The goals and recommendations of the policy to incorporate these spheres are disclosed through the research and articles regarding the NEP 2020 on education of art and craft (Ministry of Education, 2020). Such literary pieces allow one to evaluate the correspondence of NEP 2020 and the inclusion of Fine Arts in the curriculum easier.

### **Objectives and Research Methodology**

This research is aimed at investigating the issues that are currently being encountered by Fine Arts teachers of the middle schools in Delhi. The research is also expected to examine the teachers' needs in their work in Fine Arts in integrating the subject with National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020. The study employed mix method approach using questionnaire. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents sampled out of four types of schools, including Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Delhi Government Schools, NDMC Schools, and Private Schools. The sample has been made to be designed in a manner that represents those schools operating within different administrative and financial systems equally. The study will include centrally administered, state-run, and privately operated schools to allow gaining an intuitive look at Fine Arts education in the middle school system of Delhi. In total, a total of 40 schools were eligible in the study with 10 schools in each category. This equal

representation creates an opportunity to compare and evaluate the practices of Fine Arts education in various school setups in a systemic way.

**Table 1:** Sample size and distribution

S. N.	Type of School/Management	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	No. of Parents
1.	Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs)	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
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>160</b>

### Analysis and Interpretations:

#### Major Challenges Faced in Teaching Fine Arts

Fine arts no longer exist as an extracurricular activity in schools since they are currently as much part of the mainstream education as the fundamental subjects, and they make students well-rounded. They are motivating to creativity, widen the imagination, make children express themselves and open their eyes on other cultures. The classes taught by the fine arts provide the students with the assurance to venture out and relieve the academic stress. That is why there is an increase in policies such as NEP 2020 in India attempting to incorporate arts into the school day.

It is all about the teachers in the fine arts education. It is them that introduce students to new forms of art, and develop skills, and assist children in discovering their own voice. Although everybody is talking about the significance of the arts, teachers continue to encounter any type of roadblocks. There is always a lack of time, resources become exhausted, training becomes inadequate and at times it becomes a strain because no one in authority seems to understand what you are attempting to accomplish.

**Table 2:** Reported challenges in teaching Fine Arts

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of time	72	45%
Inadequate resources	66	41.2%
Lack of training	48	30%
Large class size	38	23.8%
Low priority for fine arts	56	35%
Lack of assessment guidelines	44	27.5%
Lack of administrative support	40	25%
Student disinterest	34	21.2%
Parental pressure for academics	60	37.5%
Other	8	5%

Table 2 reveals the major challenges indicated by the teachers during the fine arts teaching. Some of the most commonly cited obstacles are time (45 percent), insufficient resources (41.2 percent), and parental academic pressure (37.5 percent). The other problems that come out are lack of training (30 percent), less emphasis on fine arts (35 percent), and large classes

(23.8 percent) also arise as serious. Other less frequent, but also not insignificant issues are the absence of assessment guidelines (27.5 percent), administrative support (25 percent), and lack of interest among students (21.2 percent).

- **Time Insufficiency (45 percent):** Schools fill up with math, science and languages and the arts are relegated to the fringes. In some cases, courses in the fine arts are cut or even reduced to extracurricular time or simply abandoned during examination times.
- **Poor Resources (41.2 percent):** Nearly 50 percent of teachers indicate that they lack what they require, art supplies, instruments or even a decent classroom. Most schools, particularly beyond the large urban areas, are almost completely strapped in the arts. The teachers are left to scramble with used materials or footing bills out of their own pocket and this does not leave so much that they can actually do.
- **Parental Pressure of Academics (37.5 percent):** Parents have continued to perceive arts as a waste of time. They desire their children to pay attention to real things; hence the teacher must strive twice more to engage the students. Lack of appreciation of the arts by families makes it difficult to maintain motivation among the students by teachers.
- **Poor Prioritization of Fine Arts (35 percent):** Schools serve fine arts as an auxiliary meal, rather than a meal. The teachers are not able to receive time, recognition or funds and in most cases they have no problem fighting an uphill battle to be taken seriously.
- **Insufficient Training (30 percent):** There are plenty of art teachers who are passionate, but not every one of them is trained in the way on how to teach. The number of programs available to assist them in acquiring new skills or staying abreast with new things such as digital art and cross-disciplinary projects is limited. It is more difficult to introduce new ideas to the classroom because of that.
- **Absence of Assessment Guidelines (27.5 percent):** It is not similar to grading math as there is no correct answer. Lacking guidelines, teachers become confused in an attempt to quantify creativity or originality, and that creates grade wrangles with students and parents.
- **Absence of Administrative Support (25 percent):** Most of the teachers complain that they are not supported by school leaders. That manifests itself in meager financing, limited training or workshop opportunities, and poor acknowledgment at the school events. Fine arts programs remain peripheral without the government in their support.
- **Large Class Sizes (23.8 percent):** Art classes are best taught whereby a teacher can personally attend to the students. With big classes, that is not possible and hence the kids are not provided with the feedback and encouragement. It also reduces actual activities, performances, and exhibit.
- **Student Disinterest (21.2 percent):** there are those children who simply are not into the arts, and this is because their parents or society assure them that it is not necessary. Others are not inspired or do not believe that they are good at it. Even the most committed teachers find it difficult to maintain the momentum when the students have got the radio on.
- **Other Problems (5 percent):** This group contains such problems as a lack of cooperation prospects, exposure to professional artists, and technology. Although the latter are less prevalent, these issues are indicative of the various challenges that face fine arts educators.

The largest issues in this front are quite obvious the lack of time by teachers, lack of resources, and parents are insisting on more emphasis on schools. Then there are all the other ones like the fine arts is never a priority in most schools there is just not enough time to train teachers and where-oh-where is the one to know how to test the students.

Despite all these difficulties, fine arts do not lack significance. It causes innovation, makes children learn about culture, and promotes their emotional development. To correct this, everybody (policymakers, school leaders, teachers, parents, and students) should be involved. When schools are better funded, better trained, their parents better informed about why the arts are important and there are policies that work then there will be room to expand the space to fine arts right next to math and science. Fine arts are not to be merely an added item. It is the gist of actual education. When these issues are addressed in school, students do not merely get smarter because they learn to value art, learn to understand their feelings and relate to the surrounding world.

### Teachers' Resource Needs for Strengthening Fine Arts Instruction

Since three conditions must be satisfied, the following aspects are important: (i) time to teach, (ii) tools and spaces to create, and (iii) teachers who feel prepared and supported. Their attitude in regards to what really matters in classrooms is thus critical. Table 3 shows what 160 teachers (sample size) said would assist them in improving teaching in the field of fine-arts. Since the respondents were allowed to indicate more than one choice, the sums total up to more than 100 percent. The answers are grouped into seven categories of resources- time, supplies, space, training, teaching aids and digital resources and resource books- that include not only those resources needed daily (consumables, aids) but also long-term enablers (timetabling, dedicated rooms, professional development).

**Table 3:** Teacher identified resources needed to improve Fine Arts instruction

S. N.	Resource Category	Frequency (Teachers)	Percentage of Teachers
1.	More time allocation	126	78.8%
2.	Art supplies (consumables/tools)	118	73.8%
3.	Dedicated space (art room/studio)	112	70.0%
4.	Specialized training (PD/skill up-gradation)	104	65.0%
5.	Digital resources (devices, apps, software)	98	61.3%
6.	Teaching aids (models, charts, exemplars)	92	57.5%
7.	Resource books (technique, history, appreciation)	88	55.0%

In the perspective of the teachers, time, materials and space take the upper hand. Almost half of teachers would prefer an additional schedule time to teach sequential and practical lessons (78.8 percent). Right behind are art supplies (73.8 percent) - the practical base of studio learning and dedicated space (70.0 percent), which is an indicator of the necessity of a safer and more permanent arrangement, wherein work can be stored, displayed and reviewed. One third of it (65.0 percent), very strong two-thirds, is the need to have specialized training, which is an accurate fact because art pedagogy deals with a wide variety of different media and practices (as folk arts to digital illustration). Digital resources (61.3 percent) are already the mainstream requirements - devices, projectors, tablets, and software open the new

workflows and access to the global best practice. The list is finished by teaching aids (57.5 percent) and resource books (55.0 percent) as the scaffolds that assist teachers in modeling technique and organizing classes as well as imprinting art history and appreciation with as much studio practice as possible.

- **Time as the king resource (78.8 percent):** Learning in art is cyclic, as the students formulate plans, experiment, reflect, revise and make presentations. Squeezing this process into one weekly cycle results in shallow activities (e.g., be finished with this drawing in a hurry) as opposed to studio habits of mind (exploration, revision, critique). The time constraint is also recognition of the logistics: the material distribution, the establishment of stations, the drying of work, cleaning, and the process of the documentation: it also takes minutes that in normal timeframes cannot be gained. Concisely, the initial quality lever is timetable design.
- **The studio runs on materials (73.8 percent):** the Art supplies are the daily draught of the practice: papers of different GSM, pigments and brushes and clay and fabrics and adhesives and carving tools and safety gears. It is the number and diversity that defines the number of techniques that teachers are actually able to teach. The scarcity of materials necessitates the repetitive, low-end work; sufficient supplies allow exploration of multi-media, mixed-media, and craft traditions and fair participation (students do not have to carry their own).
- **Space allows continuity and safety (70.0 percent):** There is a room devoted to art (with sinks, drying racks, work tables, storage, lockable cabinets, pin-up and display rooms) that allows leaving work underway, preserving delicate work, and being hygienic. It has a direct influence on risk management (e.g., tools, solvents) and inclusive access (height-appropriate furniture, clear pathways). Space also is an indicator of institutional status--a room means a place in school identity.
- **Training fosters confidence and range (65.0 percent):** Teachers seek special training not just to enrich technique (printmaking, ceramics, puppetry, textile arts, digital painting), but also to update pedagogy (critiques, portfolio, cross-curricular projects, differentiation, and inclusion of diverse abilities). The gap between policy intent (NEP 2020) and the classroom reality can be reduced with the help of professional development.
- **Digital has become a fundamental palette (61.3 percent):** The calls of digital resources show the change: Digital drawing/painting, photo editing, animation, sound design, documentation (process videos, e-portfolios) etc. are now part of the art education. Even a minimal infrastructure - a projector, a shared tablet, and free/open-source applications - will be able to change access to exemplars and methods, facilitate blended learning, and present work to parents and the community.
- **Visual scaffolds and teaching aids (57.5 percent):** Demonstration models, charts, step wise examples, anatomical manikins, colour wheels, proportion grids and technique samplers assist the teacher in visualizing tacit knowledge. They come in particularly handy in large classes when doing close one-to-one demonstration is not always possible.
- **Depth and cultural rooting resource books (55.0 percent):** Teachers still place an importance on books - technique, artist studies, art history, aesthetics, and local/folk traditions. In cases where bandwidth of the internet is not reliable, books offer a reliable

source of reference. They also maintain a maintained level of content and vocabulary which forms the basis of academic rigor in art education.

The teachers are requesting what directly drives learning; time, materials, space, training, and tools, aided by aids and books to make the instruction visible and rigorous. Addressing these needs is not luxurious; instead, it is the elementary infrastructure to the type of experiential, interdisciplinary, and inclusive arts education as projected by NEP 2020. When schools start implementing the above recommendations, which are to safeguard time, provisioning, renovating space, investing in PD and adopting digital, teaching of the fine arts will no longer be a mere activity, but will now be made into a sustained studio habit. The reward is obvious: assured, imaginative, culturally grounded students who carry with them into other classes and later life studio practices - curiosity, criticism, and endurance.

### Conclusions

The research concludes that the teaching of fine arts, which is considered by NEP 2020 an essential element of holistic education, still has significant obstacles to its implementation in the middle schools of Delhi. The voices of teachers demonstrate that the most urgent problems affecting the effective instruction are the lack of time, supplies, weak training, and poor support of the administration. Moreover, the prevailing trends in the society and pressure of parents on academic success usually shunt out the arts education, which deprives the students of a chance to receive the full benefits of creative and cultural learning. Irrespective of these difficulties, this study validates the transformational nature of the fine arts in improving creativity, critical thinking, teamwork and self-expression in students. As can be seen, it takes a systemic change to have the fine arts integrated into school curricula: the policies need to be backed by sufficient resources, specialized instructional space, professional development, and creative ways of assessment. Furthermore, parents and administrators should be made aware of the value of arts education in the long run to transform the existing attitudes. When these measures are put in place in a systematic manner, fine arts education may transform itself into a subject that is being disregarded to become a potent force of creativity, inclusiveness and cultural groundedness. This would be the realization of NEP 2020 of creating balanced, creative and understanding students.

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