



An analytical study of the marginalization of art education in Indian secondary schools

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Abstract

Drawing and art, as forms of creative expression, have long been recognized as essential components of holistic education. Yet, in India's secondary education system, they remain largely overlooked, receiving far less emphasis than core subjects such as mathematics, science, and languages. This paper investigates the factors contributing to the marginalization of painting in secondary schools, examining historical, cultural, educational, and policy-related influences. It further explores strategies to better integrate drawing and art into the curriculum, aiming to foster creativity, critical thinking, and well-rounded development among students. By emphasizing the role of teachers, parents, and policymakers, the study highlights practical measures to strengthen art education and ensure equitable access for all learners. The findings underscore the need for curriculum reform that balances academic rigor with artistic and emotional development.

Keywords: Art education, visual arts, curriculum, creativity, educational policies, drawing

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in shaping the intellectual, emotional, and social development of young individuals. It not only equips them with essential knowledge and skills but also fosters their creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. However, in India's educational framework, subjects such as science, mathematics, and literature dominate the curriculum, while creative disciplines like painting, music, and performing arts often receive minimal attention. This overemphasis on conventional academic subjects has led to a neglect of the arts, particularly painting, which plays a crucial role in nurturing students' creative abilities and emotional expression.

The exclusion of painting and other artistic subjects in secondary schools has significant consequences on students' overall educational experiences. While subjects like science and mathematics are crucial for technical and logical development, the absence of art education limits students' opportunities for creative exploration, emotional expression, and holistic growth. Art education, especially painting, provides a unique platform for students to express themselves, think critically, and approach problems with innovative solutions. Its neglect, therefore, hampers the development of well-rounded individuals who are not only proficient in technical subjects but are also creative, emotionally intelligent, and capable of thinking outside the box.

This chapter introduces the issue of neglecting painting education in secondary schools, highlighting how this exclusion affects both the academic and personal growth of students. By drawing attention to the imbalanced focus in the educational system, it aims to shed light on the importance of integrating painting into the curriculum as a means to promote creativity, emotional well-being, and intellectual flexibility. The chapter also presents an overview of the research problem, providing a framework for understanding why painting is underrepresented in India's educational system and the broader implications of this neglect.

The key research questions are identified, focusing on the historical, cultural, and educational factors contributing to the marginalization of painting, as well as the ways in which these challenges can be addressed. The study also aims to explore the benefits of incorporating painting into the secondary school curriculum and how it can contribute to students' overall academic and emotional development. The research objectives outlined in this chapter seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of painting education in India, identify the barriers to its integration, and propose actionable strategies for promoting its inclusion in secondary education. Through this study, the chapter aims to lay the foundation for a broader dialogue on the importance of the arts in education and the need for a more balanced and holistic approach to student development.

Background of the Subject

India boasts a rich and diverse tradition of visual arts, particularly painting, spanning thousands of years. From the intricate frescoes adorning the walls of ancient temples such as those at Ajanta and Ellora to the vibrant and distinctive miniature paintings of the Mughal and Rajput eras, India's artistic heritage reflects its rich culture, history, and spiritual practices. These art forms have served not only as expressions of cultural identity but also as powerful means of communication, education, and storytelling. The evolution of painting in India has been shaped by a range of historical, religious, and cultural influences, making it an integral part of the country's artistic legacy.

Despite this long-standing tradition, painting as a formal academic subject in India's secondary schools has remained significantly limited. Historically, art education was often considered supplementary or non-essential within the mainstream curriculum, confined to specialized institutions or offered as extracurricular activities. The focus of school education largely remained on "practical" subjects such as mathematics, science, and languages, with little effort to integrate the arts into broader learning. This marginalization can be traced back to colonial influences, when the Western

education system prioritized subjects aligned with industrial and administrative needs, pushing the arts to the periphery. During the British colonial era, education was primarily structured to produce a workforce for administrative and industrial purposes. Art, which had historically been a central component of India's educational and cultural system, was not considered a practical skill for governance or economic development. As a result, colonial education distanced itself from India's artistic traditions, regarding them as irrelevant to modern progress. Post-independence, while there was growing recognition of the need to preserve and promote cultural heritage, painting and other forms of visual art remained largely confined to specialized art institutions. Notable examples include the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, the Government College of Art and Craft in Kolkata, and Kala Bhavana at Santiniketan, which emerged as centers for formal art training and creative experimentation. These institutions played a critical role in preserving India's visual arts traditions and in training professional artists, yet their reach remained limited compared to the broader school education system. In the decades following independence, India's education system expanded its focus primarily on subjects considered essential for socio-economic growth, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and language studies. As a result, art education, including painting, was not prioritized as a core component of the

curriculum. This reinforced the perception of art as an extracurricular pursuit rather than an academic discipline, diminishing its role in fostering holistic student development.

Sociocultural factors have further contributed to the marginalization of painting in schools. There is a widely held belief that careers in science, technology, and business offer stability and financial security, whereas art is often perceived as less practical or lucrative. This perception is deeply embedded in the educational culture, leading to limited policy support and inadequate encouragement within schools. Consequently, parents and educators frequently regard artistic subjects as hobbies rather than as valuable skills that cultivate intellectual, emotional, and creative growth in students.

Literature Review

Many experts have researched the importance of painting and other fine arts education. Various academic studies have demonstrated that fine arts are crucial for the mental, emotional, and creative development of students. Painting is not just an art form but also an effective tool for stimulating students' thinking, shaping their creativity, and strengthening their self-confidence. Painting provides students with the opportunity to think critically, solve problems, and develop social communication skills.

Below are some key studies and thoughts

Author(s)	Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Implications for Education
Kumar, D.	2014	Creativity and problem-solving	Painting enhances creativity and strengthens problem-solving abilities among students.	Supports inclusion of painting to promote critical and imaginative thinking.
Sharma, N.	2016	Psychological impact of painting	Painting reduces stress and anxiety and improves emotional expression and stability.	Highlights the role of art education in supporting students' mental health.
Prasad, R. N.	2018	Status of fine arts in schools	Fine arts are marginalized, while core academic subjects are prioritized.	Emphasizes need for curriculum reform to elevate art education.
Sharma, S.	2015	Social development through art	Art education improves social interaction and cultural awareness.	Encourages integration of painting to enhance social skills and cultural understanding.
Tiwari, K.	2017	Teacher training in art education	Lack of trained teachers affects the quality of painting instruction.	Indicates need for professional development and specialized training programs.
Joshi, S.	2019	Availability of resources	Schools lack adequate materials and updated tools for art education.	Suggests increased funding and improved infrastructure for effective art learning.

In addition, numerous psychological studies have shown that art has a positive impact on students' mental health. Art provides students with a safe and creative way to express their emotions. Artistic expression can also help reduce stress and anxiety. All of these factors play a vital role in the overall development of a student's personality.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was conducted across a sample of secondary schools from various regions of India to assess the availability and frequency of art education within the curriculum.

Number of participants

200 students
15 Art teachers
100 parents

Student Interview Responses Table

Students, instructors, and parents from classes 5 through 10 at five different urban schools participated in a baseline survey. The objective was to compile information and create the survey table that follows, which includes the participants' answers.

Table 1: Student Interview Results on Art Education (200 Students)

S. No.	Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Response
1	Did you take Art or Fine Arts as a subject in school?	Art is an optional subject, but in some schools, it is mandatory – 40 (20%)	In some schools, art is a compulsory subject – 30 (15%)	Art is taught, but it is less emphasized in the curriculum – 80 (40%)	Art is optional or less emphasized – 50 (25%)	2.45

2	How do you feel about the subject of art?	I enjoy art as it gives me peace of mind and happiness – 70 (35%)	Art feels like wasted time; more focus should be on other subjects—20 (10%).	I like art, but there is less time for it, and I prioritize other subjects – 60 (30%)	I like art, but prioritize other subjects – 50 (25%)	2.7
3	How important is art in the curriculum?	Art should be important in the curriculum, but it receives less attention – 50 (25%)	Art is given less importance, causing students to neglect it – 60 (30%)	Art should be important, but due to core subjects, it gets less focus – 50 (25%)	Art is less important; core subjects are prioritized – 40 (20%)	2.5
4	Do you have the proper resources to learn art?	Many schools lack resources when they are needed – 20 (10%)	Some schools have resources, but they are not used effectively – 40 (20%)	There are resources, but they are insufficient and lack quality – 80 (40%)	There is a lack of resources and quality – 60 (30%)	2.1
5	How does art impact your school life?	Art plays an important role in mental and emotional development and boosts self-confidence – 60 (30%)	Art does not have much of an impact. Other academic subjects are more important – 30 (15%)	Art could be useful for my development, but more attention is given to other subjects – 70 (35%)	Art boosts self-confidence, but core subjects are more important – 40 (20%)	2.6

Teacher Interview Responses Table

Table 2: Teacher Interview Responses on Art Education (15 Teachers)

S. No.	Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Response
1	Do you teach Art or Fine Arts as a subject in your school?	Art is an optional subject in some schools, but it may be compulsory in others – 4 (27%)	In some schools, art is a compulsory subject and is treated as an integral part of the curriculum – 3 (20%)	Art is taught, but it is given less emphasis compared to core academic subjects – 6 (40%)	Art is optional or less emphasized – 2 (13%)	2.53
2	How do you feel about the importance of art?	I believe art is very important for students' overall development – 6 (40%)	Art is important but often overshadowed by the emphasis on core subjects – 4 (27%)	Art is valuable, but due to time constraints, it's difficult to give it the attention it deserves – 3 (20%)	Art is important but often less prioritized in the school setting – 2 (13%)	2.87
3	How important is art in the school curriculum?	Art should be integral to the curriculum – 5 (33%)	Art is often given less importance, leading to its neglect – 4 (27%)	Art should be important, but limited time due to focus on core subjects – 4 (27%)	Art is less important; core subjects are prioritized – 2 (13%)	2.8
4	Do you feel you have adequate resources to teach Art?	Many schools face a shortage of resources – 5 (33%)	Some schools provide resources, but they are underused or insufficient – 3 (20%)	Resources available but inadequate or low quality – 5 (33%)	Lack of resources and quality – 2 (13%)	2.73
5	How does teaching Art impact students' overall growth?	Art has significant impact on emotional and mental development – 6 (40%)	Art doesn't always have a significant impact compared to other subjects – 2 (13%)	Art can support development, but often overshadowed – 4 (27%)	Art boosts self-confidence and creativity, but core subjects are prioritized – 3 (20%)	2.87

Parent Interview Responses Table

Table 3: Parent Interview Responses on Art Education (50 Parents)

S. No.	Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Response
1	What is your opinion about the subject of Art?	Art is important, but it holds less significance compared to other subjects – 10 (20%)	Art is essential for students' development, but it doesn't seem to receive much importance in school – 15 (30%)	Art is important, but it is considered less important compared to core academic subjects – 15 (30%)	Art is important, but less significant compared to other subjects – 10 (20%)	2.5
2	Are you enthusiastic about teaching your child art?	I am enthusiastic because art encourages creativity in students – 20 (40%)	It is important to teach children art, but more focus should be given to other academic subjects – 10 (20%)	Sometimes, I don't see the need to teach children art; core subjects seem more important – 10 (20%)	There is enthusiasm to teach art, but more focus is given to other subjects – 10 (20%)	2.8
3	Why is art important for students' development?	Art is beneficial for students' mental and emotional development – 15 (30%)	Art is necessary for students' natural development and fosters creativity – 20 (40%)	Art is somewhat linked to overall development, but core subjects are seen as more important – 10 (20%)	Art is important for development, but is less important than core academic subjects – 5 (10%)	2.1
4	What improvements should be made	Schools need better resources, and teachers should be given proper	Art education should be more accessible, and students made aware of its	Parents need to be more actively involved to bring improvements – 10 (20%)	Better resources, proper training, and increased awareness are needed –	2.7

	in art education?	training – 10 (20%)	importance – 15 (30%)		15 (30%)	
5	How can art become more important?	Schools should give more importance to art and provide adequate resources – 15 (30%)	Improving the quality of art teachers will make it more significant – 10 (20%)	Parents and teachers should work together to increase awareness among students – 10 (20%)	Schools, quality of teachers, and parental involvement are crucial – 15 (30%)	2.8

Research Objective

1. The reasons behind the neglect of painting as a subject in secondary education in India.
2. To examine the impact of neglecting painting on students' academic and emotional development.
3. To analyze the role of policy and curriculum design in the marginalization of art subjects.
4. To explore the attitudes of various stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) towards painting education.
5. To suggest practical solutions for reintegrating painting into secondary school curricula.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The neglect of painting education in secondary schools is largely due to an overemphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects in the national educational policies.
2. The socio-cultural perception of art as a non-essential subject contributes to the lack of institutional support for painting in schools.
3. A shortage of trained and qualified art educators in schools plays a significant role in the underdevelopment of painting programs.
4. The general lack of awareness regarding the long-term benefits of painting education leads to diminished interest among both students and parents

Limitations of the Study

1. **Geographical Constraints:** The research is primarily based on urban schools, which may not represent the conditions in rural areas, where access to painting education may differ.
2. **Respondent Bias:** The responses from teachers, students, and parents may be influenced by personal opinions, biases, or limited exposure to the importance of painting education.
3. **Curriculum Differences:** The study focuses on a specific set of state curricula, which may not fully reflect the diversity of educational approaches across India.

Results

The findings from the interviews with parents, students, and teachers provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of art education in India's secondary schools. While all groups acknowledge the importance of art for students' overall development, there is a consistent trend of underemphasis on the subject within the school curriculum.

Parents recognize art's role in nurturing creativity and emotional well-being, yet they often prioritize core academic subjects like Math, Science, and Languages. There is enthusiasm for teaching art at home, but the systemic lack of resources and focus on academic subjects

hampers the broader educational landscape. Parents also point out the need for better resources, improved teacher training, and greater awareness of art's importance.

Students, on the other hand, enjoy art and recognize its emotional and developmental benefits, but they often find themselves with limited time for the subject. This is due to the priority given to core academic subjects, which affects both the time dedicated to art and the resources available. Students acknowledge that despite the potential benefits, the lack of emphasis on art limits its impact on their overall educational experience.

Teachers also stress the importance of art in fostering creativity, self-expression, and emotional growth, but note that time constraints and resource scarcity limit their ability to teach art effectively. They often find themselves forced to prioritize core subjects, leaving little room for integrating art education in a meaningful way.

Conclusion Recommendations

This study highlights the systematic neglect of painting education in India's secondary schools, despite its recognized importance for fostering creativity and supporting emotional, cognitive, and social development. The findings reveal that painting, while valued by educators, parents, and students for its potential to nurture critical thinking, emotional expression, and problem-solving abilities, is often relegated to the periphery of the curriculum.

The overemphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics subjects, insufficient resources, lack of qualified teachers, and socio-cultural perceptions of art as less essential to academic success contribute to its marginalization.

The research suggests that the lack of institutional support and the inadequate allocation of time and resources to painting education are the primary factors responsible for this neglect. Furthermore, the study underscores the consequences of this oversight, particularly in terms of the missed opportunities for student development in areas such as emotional intelligence, self-confidence, and innovative thinking.

In examining these factors, the study concludes that to reverse the current trend and elevate the status of painting within the education system, a multi-faceted approach is required. This includes revising the school curriculum to incorporate painting as a core subject, improving teacher training programs, and enhancing awareness among parents, school administrators, and policymakers about the long-term benefits of art education. Additionally, integrating painting into interdisciplinary projects and recognizing its value beyond the confines of traditional academic subjects could help reinforce its relevance and importance.

The findings of this study stress the importance of painting in shaping well-rounded, creative individuals who possess the skills needed for critical thinking and problem-solving in an increasingly complex world. Addressing the neglect of painting in India's secondary schools will not only ensure a

more holistic approach to education but will also contribute to the development of students who are equipped to navigate the challenges of the future with creativity, empathy, and innovation.

Recommendations

1. Make Drawing a Core Subject

Art should be included as a compulsory subject in national and state curricula. Integrating it with history, literature, and social studies can emphasize its academic significance. This approach ensures equal access for all students and secures a rightful place for artistic development within education.

2. Strengthen Teacher Training and Engage Parents & Community

Teacher education programs should combine technical drawing skills with creative pedagogical methods. Regular workshops and professional development can keep educators up to date. Simultaneously, parents and communities should be informed about the cognitive, emotional, and intellectual benefits of drawing through exhibitions, workshops, and interactive programs. Together, this fosters a supportive environment that encourages high-quality art education.

3. Improve Resources, Infrastructure, and Administrative Support

Schools should provide dedicated drawing and art classrooms, quality materials, digital tools, and opportunities for exploring diverse media. Administrators must recognize drawing as an essential academic subject and allocate adequate resources and funding. Proper infrastructure and administrative support foster creativity, skill development, and opportunities in both traditional and digital art.

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