

# **Evolving Roles of Art Educators in India: From Guru-Shishya Parampara to the New Education Policy**

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## **Abstract**

The role of educators extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; they play a crucial part in shaping the future identities of their students. This holds especially true for art educators, who not only train students in academic and technical skills but also nurture their creative thinking and individual expression. Art education is not about replicating an educator's style or ideas, but about fostering originality and personal artistic identity. In the Indian context, art educators have consistently played a significant role across different historical periods—ranging from the traditional Guru-Shishya Parampara to the formal systems of art education in schools and institutions. This paper explores the evolving role of art educators in India and their impact on the development of student's creative potential and individuality.

**Keywords-** Art education, Art educators, New education policy2020, Visual arts

## **Purpose of the study**

This study aims to explore the role and presence of art educators in India from early historical periods to the current educational policies. It examines the philosophical, pedagogical, and interpersonal approaches employed by educators across different time periods. The research seeks to deepen the understanding of the various factors that have shaped art education and influenced artistic development in the Indian context.

## **Scope and Significance**

The scope of this study encompasses a multidisciplinary analysis from fields such as education and studies. Using a comparative lens, it examines the pedagogical approaches across different historical periods and the positive and negative changes that have shaped the evolution of art education in India. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform and enhance current art education practices, thereby contributing to a more enriched and dynamic educational system. By critically evaluating the strengths and limitations of past and present approaches, this research aims to support the development of a more inclusive and holistic educational framework that fosters creativity and a deeper appreciation of the arts.

## **Art educators as intellectual and creative mentors**

the role of an educator goes far beyond simply imparting knowledge to students. A teacher's true purpose is to help students develop their own unique identity in the future. This is especially important in art education, where the value of teaching is truly realized when a student, having acquired technical and

academic knowledge from their teacher, evolves their own distinctive style. True education is not about lifelong imitation of one's teacher, but about creating an original approach that can inspire future generations. In India, various time periods have witnessed the emergence of numerous art educators who played a vital role in shaping art education. Although the names of individual educators are not mentioned in ancient texts, references to informal art education can be found in scriptures such as the Vedas, Puranas, Chitrastotra, Chitrakalashana, the Ramayana, and others. In later periods, with the advent of formal art education, figures like Abanindranath Tagore, E.B. Havell, B.C. Sanyal, and Gladstone Solomon made significant contributions to its development. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers significant opportunities for art educators to make substantial contributions and explore new avenues in the educational landscape.

### **Art Educators in Informal Traditions: The Legacy of the Guru-Shishya Parampara–**

Ancient Indian texts provide extensive and independent descriptions of the principles, rules, and methods of art, indicating the early development of art as a formal discipline. These efforts, initiated by scholars, suggest the beginnings of structured art education. Evidence of art can be found in several ancient Vedic texts, where it was traditionally passed down through the guru-shishya (teacher-disciple) tradition.

In the Rigveda, there is a reference to depictions of Agni (the fire god) on leather canvases, showing early examples of visual art. Similarly, in classical Sanskrit literature, the Ramayana mentions Ravana's art gallery, which likely functioned as a center of art education based on the guru-shishya tradition. According to the ancient text Manasara, Vishwakarma—considered the first architect and craftsman of the world—authored the Shilpa Shastra, laying down the foundational principles of art and design, and establishing the basis for artistic instruction and tradition. The Vishnudharmottara Purana, particularly in the section known as Chitrastotra, presents a dialogue between a guru and a disciple, explaining the theories and principles of painting.

During the medieval period, miniature painting flourished in the courts of Rajasthan, where students received training directly under master artists. Likewise, in the Mughal era, particularly under the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir, large royal art studios were established, where senior artists mentored and trained emerging talent.<sup>1</sup>

### **From Tradition to Institution: Art Educators and the Emergence of Formal Art Education in India-**

The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) was established in 1648. Following the Industrial Revolution, towards the end of the 18th century, a movement to reform art education began in England. This initiative inspired the government to establish new design schools and an organized system of art education. Until 1793, the Academy maintained oversight and held a monopoly over the arts in France.<sup>2</sup> The institutions provided training to artists through instruction and lectures, which led them to prestigious commissions and opportunities to showcase their work. However, this hierarchical structure ultimately led to the dissolution of the Academy during the French Revolution. In Britain, the institutionalization of formal art education began with the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Among its most notable founding members were Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough.

In 1600, the British East India Company was established in India, marking the beginning of European influence on the subcontinent. During this period, art schools were founded to teach Western techniques, and their authority gradually increased. In the 19th century, English-style art institutions were established,

and by the 20th century, these schools began aligning with European art movements. By the latter half of the 19th century, four major art schools had been set up in India. However, most of the instructors and principals were British, often appointed from England. They lacked awareness of both the latest European art movements and traditional Indian art. As a result, they modified the curriculum according to their personal preferences, leading to a gradual decline in artistic standards.

The first art college in India was established in Madras, but it is the Bengal School of Art that is credited with creating a nationwide atmosphere for the teaching of painting. Abanindranath Tagore, the pioneer of the wash technique in India, not only mastered the style himself but also taught it to his students. While their initial works adhered closely to the wash technique, they did not remain confined to it; instead, they experimented with other mediums and eventually developed new styles which they then passed on to their students. For instance, Nandalal Bose, one of his primary disciples, initially employed the wash technique in his early works. However, he later developed his unique style characterized by the Neo-Bengal School's tempera medium, as exemplified in (Plate 1). Similarly, another artist, Asit Kumar Haldar, began with the wash technique but subsequently pioneered his distinctive 'Lascit' technique (Plate 2), establishing his own artistic identity. A similar trend is seen in the works of the J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, where teachers and students often went outdoors for live sketching and painting, leading to similarities in subject matter and style.

In 1929, Bhavesh Chandra Sanyal, after completing his education at the Calcutta Art College, was appointed as a teacher in Lahore. Though trained in the Neo-Bengal style, he eventually developed his own unique artistic approach, which influenced not only his students but also other contemporary artists. When Amrita Sher-Gil came to Lahore, she was likely influenced by Sanyal's works, adopting a vivid and expressive color palette in her own paintings. (plate 3)

### **Reimagining Art Education: The Evolving Role of Educators in NEP 2020-**

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong emphasis on the integration of arts into the education framework, on holistic, multidisciplinary, and experiential learning. In this context, art education and art educators play a crucial role in fostering creativity, imagination, and innovative thinking among students. The policy promotes a multidisciplinary approach, enabling students from various academic backgrounds to develop their creative skills through diverse interdisciplinary projects and assignments. The policy promotes art-integrated education as a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various forms of art and culture as the basis for learning concepts across subjects.

The introduction of high-quality programs and degrees in fields such as art and museum administration, archaeology, artefact conservation, graphic design, and web design within the higher education system will create expanded opportunities for employment, making effective use of these qualifications. Art education techniques are recognized for their role in the inclusion of students with disabilities, providing them with avenues to express themselves and gain confidence in their abilities.

Art serves as a powerful medium for promoting self-expression, empathy, and cultural awareness. This relationship is reciprocal—just as art enriches other subjects, it also draws upon them to deepen the understanding and development of art students. Historically, art has always been interconnected with religion, philosophy, science, society, morality, and even mathematics.

A compelling example of this interconnection is the work of Leonardo da Vinci, a true polymath. His studies—such as the Vitruvian Man and research on the Golden Ratio—(plate 3) demonstrate how artistic

inquiry and scientific exploration can merge seamlessly. Today, these concepts are considered fundamental components of art education, reflecting the enduring value of a multidisciplinary perspective.

Although the new curriculum is still in the early stages of implementation, educators have already begun adopting its principles. They are helping to break down the silos between disciplines, aligning with the NEP 2020's vision of a liberal and flexible education system. Over time, this shift is expected to bring about a significant positive change, with creativity playing a central role in learning. The policy emphasizes hands-on learning and project-based pedagogy, where educators support students in building concepts through artistic mediums. NEP 2020 also recommends formative and competency-based assessments. In this context, art educators play a vital role in developing and evaluating creative portfolios, performances, and projects, thereby fostering deeper engagement and understanding.

As mentioned earlier, NEP 2020 has only recently been introduced, and its implementation is still in the early stages. However, in the future, educators will need to continue making improvements for the betterment of the education system. They should adopt new pedagogical approaches, integrate digital tools, and foster collaboration across disciplines.

Going forward, educators from multidisciplinary backgrounds will play an important role in helping students develop the ability to think from multiple perspectives and enhance their creative skills. Additionally, art educators may take on the responsibility of training teachers from other subjects to incorporate artistic methods into their teaching practices.

**Conclusion** – Art educators help students develop the ability to express their ideas with confidence and think independently. They not only enhance students' technical skills but also nurture their capacity for creative thinking. From earlier times to the present, art educators have continuously faced challenges, yet they have always contributed new and valuable creations to society. Today, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents both a significant challenge and a great opportunity for art educators. It allows them to explore and expand the scope of art education, striving to secure a meaningful and respected place for it within the Indian education system.

## PLATES



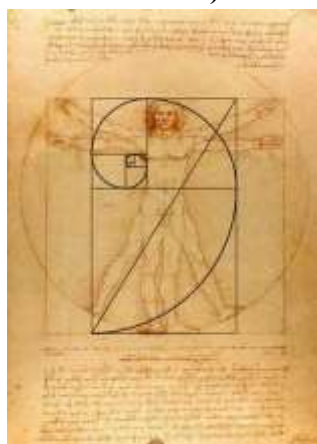
**Plate 1: from left : tissrakshita Avanindranath Tagore (wash), Parthsarthi Nandalal bose (Wash), Haripura congress panel Nandalal bose (Tempera)**



**Plate 2: from left : Woman sitting under the tree by Asit Kumar Haldar(wash technique), Woman by Asit Kumar Haldar (Lascit technique)**



**Plate 3: from left: Rural scene BC Sanyal, Rural scene Amrita Shergil (bright and bold color scheme)**



**Plate 4: Vitruvian man by Leonardo Vinci in DA VINCI CODE; shows the proportion of human body (arts) also the placement of square and rectangle in same plan which gives the value of  $\pi$  in future(maths) also this shows golden rectangle which gives the importance of golden ratio in art and also the golden ratio  $\phi$**

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