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## Reconfiguring Fine Arts Education in India: An AISHE Driven Analysis of Expansion, Pedagogy, and Technological Change

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a data centred analysis of the transformation of fine arts education in India by positioning the All India Survey on Higher Education as the primary analytical framework. Drawing on AISHE datasets from 2012 to 2022, it examines enrolment expansion as a structural condition that reveals both growth and systemic imbalance. While fine arts participation has nearly doubled over the past decade, this expansion has not been matched by proportional institutional or pedagogical transformation. The analysis demonstrates that emerging developments such as hybrid learning, artificial intelligence integration, and multidisciplinary reforms are better understood as responses to data evidenced pressures rather than independent innovations. The National Education Policy 2020 is interpreted within this framework as a policy response to structural conditions identified through AISHE trends. The study argues that meaningful reform in art education must begin with empirical analysis of enrolment and institutional data, ensuring that pedagogical and policy interventions align with structural realities. By foregrounding AISHE as the basis of interpretation, the paper contributes to a more grounded and analytically rigorous understanding of contemporary art education in India.

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### 1. Introduction



Fine arts education in India has traditionally been interpreted through historical evolution, aesthetic theory, or institutional critique. While such approaches provide valuable insights, they often operate at a level of abstraction that overlooks the material conditions shaping the field. In contrast, national datasets such as the All India Survey on Higher Education offer a longitudinal and empirical perspective that enables a more grounded analysis of transformation.

AISHE reports, compiled annually by the Ministry of Education, document enrolment, institutional distribution, faculty strength, and disciplinary trends across higher education in India. When examined over a decade, these datasets reveal that fine arts education has undergone significant expansion. Undergraduate enrolment alone has nearly doubled between 2012–13 and 2021–22, increasing from approximately twenty five thousand to close to fifty thousand students (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2023).

This expansion reflects broader shifts within Indian higher education. Total enrolment across disciplines increased from approximately 34.2 million in 2014–15 to over 43 million in 2021–22, accompanied by rising female participation and improved gross enrolment ratios (Ministry of Education, 2023). Within this larger context, the growth of fine arts education signals changing cultural attitudes towards creative professions and the increasing institutionalisation of artistic training.

However, the significance of AISHE data lies not only in documenting growth but in revealing imbalance. Expansion is uneven across regions and institutions, and it is not accompanied by proportional increases in infrastructure, faculty, or curricular innovation. These patterns suggest that transformation in art education is fundamentally structural rather than purely pedagogical or ideological.

This paper therefore adopts a data first approach. It does not treat AISHE as supplementary evidence but as the primary analytical lens. The central argument is that the crisis and transformation of fine arts education in India must be read through AISHE data first, and only then through pedagogy, market, or policy. By doing so, the study seeks to reposition debates on art education within a framework of empirical analysis and structural critique.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology grounded in longitudinal analysis of AISHE reports from 2012–13 to 2021–22. The focus is not on statistical modelling but on identifying structural trends across time, including patterns of enrolment growth, institutional distribution, and disciplinary positioning.



AISHE reports are treated as primary data sources. These include annual publications of the Ministry of Education that provide disaggregated information on higher education across India. Comparative reading of successive reports allows for the identification of continuity and change within fine arts education.

Secondary sources, including art market reports, pedagogical studies, and policy documents such as the National Education Policy 2020, are used to contextualise these trends. However, they are interpreted as responses to patterns revealed by AISHE data rather than as independent explanatory frameworks.

The methodological premise of this paper is that structural transformation must be inferred from empirical evidence before being theorised. This reverses the conventional approach in art education research, where theoretical arguments often precede engagement with data.

### **3. AISHE and the Expansion of Fine Arts Education**

AISHE data reveals a consistent and sustained increase in fine arts enrolment over the past decade. Undergraduate enrolment rose from approximately 24,993 students in 2012–13 to 49,817 in 2021–22, representing a near doubling within ten years (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2023). Postgraduate enrolment shows a similar upward trend, indicating growing demand for advanced training in the field.

This expansion must be situated within the broader growth of higher education in India. The total number of universities increased from 760 in 2014–15 to over 1,100 in 2021–22, while colleges expanded significantly across both urban and semi urban regions (Ministry of Education, 2023). The rise in fine arts enrolment therefore reflects both general expansion and discipline specific shifts.

Three key patterns emerge from this data.

First, expansion is gradual and sustained rather than episodic. This suggests structural growth driven by long term changes in access and aspiration rather than short term policy interventions.

Second, participation in fine arts education is becoming more inclusive. AISHE data indicates increasing enrolment of women and students from historically marginalised communities across higher education (Ministry of Education, 2023). While discipline specific data for fine arts is limited, it is reasonable to infer that similar trends are present.

Third, fine arts remain a relatively small discipline within the larger higher education system. Despite growth, it constitutes a minor proportion of total enrolment compared to fields such as engineering,



commerce, and management. This marginality has implications for resource allocation, policy attention, and institutional prioritisation.

The significance of these patterns lies in their implications. Expansion indicates opportunity, but it also generates pressure. Increased student numbers require corresponding increases in infrastructure, faculty, and curricular innovation. AISHE data suggests that such proportional expansion has not occurred.

#### **4. Structural Imbalances Revealed by AISHE**

While AISHE data highlights growth, it simultaneously exposes systemic imbalances that shape the current condition of fine arts education.

One major issue is uneven geographical distribution. Institutions offering fine arts programmes are concentrated in certain states and metropolitan areas, while many regions remain underserved. This creates disparities in access and contributes to regional inequalities in educational opportunity.

A second issue is the mismatch between enrolment growth and institutional capacity. The increase in student numbers is not matched by equivalent growth in faculty strength or physical infrastructure. This leads to overcrowded studios, limited access to resources, and reduced opportunities for individual mentorship.

A third issue concerns disciplinary marginality. Fine arts, as a smaller discipline within higher education, often receives less funding and institutional attention compared to technical or professional fields. This affects both the quality and visibility of programmes.

These imbalances produce a condition that may be described as structural strain. Expansion creates demand, but institutions struggle to meet it. This strain manifests in pedagogical practices, institutional organisation, and student experience.

Importantly, these issues are not external to the system. They are revealed directly through AISHE data. The dataset therefore functions not only as a record of growth but as a diagnostic tool that identifies underlying challenges.

#### **5. Interpreting Expansion: Access, Aspiration, and Contradiction**

The expansion of fine arts enrolment reflects broader changes in social and cultural attitudes. Creative careers are increasingly seen as viable pathways, supported by the growth of the creative economy and



digital platforms. Students are drawn to art education not only for traditional practice but also for opportunities in design, media, and digital content production.

However, this shift in aspiration is not fully accommodated within existing institutional frameworks. Curricula often remain focused on traditional studio practices, with limited integration of digital tools, interdisciplinary approaches, or professional training.

This produces a contradiction. The student body changes in response to contemporary cultural conditions, but the educational system remains rooted in historical models. AISHE data makes this contradiction visible by highlighting the gap between quantitative expansion and qualitative transformation.

The concept of expansion without transformation captures this condition. Growth occurs, but it does not lead to structural change. Instead, it amplifies existing limitations, making them more visible and more urgent.

## **6. Pedagogical Transformation as a Response to AISHE Conditions**

The structural pressures identified through AISHE data necessitate a reconsideration of pedagogical practices in fine arts education. The expansion of enrolment, combined with limited institutional capacity, directly affects the feasibility of traditional teaching models.

Studio based learning has historically been central to art education, emphasising iterative making, critique, and embodied practice. However, this model is resource intensive and dependent on low student to faculty ratios. AISHE data indicates that such conditions are increasingly difficult to maintain as enrolment grows without proportional increases in faculty and infrastructure (Ministry of Education, 2023).

This creates a pedagogical constraint. Larger cohorts reduce opportunities for individual feedback, experimentation, and sustained mentorship. As a result, institutions are compelled to explore alternative teaching models.

Digital learning and hybrid pedagogy emerge within this context as structural adaptations rather than purely technological innovations. Online platforms allow for asynchronous critique, collaborative engagement, and access to diverse resources. Hybrid models combine physical studio practice with digital interaction, enabling institutions to manage larger student populations while maintaining elements of experiential learning.



Research indicates that such models enhance flexibility and accessibility, particularly in contexts where physical resources are limited (Tsai et al., 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2025). However, their adoption must be understood as a response to the structural conditions revealed by AISHE data rather than an independent pedagogical shift.

## **7. Artificial Intelligence as Pedagogical and Structural Adaptation**

The integration of artificial intelligence into art education represents a further stage in this process of adaptation. AI technologies provide tools for image generation, visual analysis, and creative experimentation, expanding the scope of artistic practice.

From a pedagogical perspective, AI enables scalable forms of engagement. In contexts where large student populations limit individual interaction, AI tools can provide alternative modes of feedback and exploration. For example, generative systems allow students to experiment with multiple visual possibilities, while analytical tools support the study of composition and style.

Studies suggest that AI based pedagogy enhances visual literacy and encourages critical engagement with artistic processes (Bayer, 2025). Similarly, AI technologies have been shown to expand aesthetic perception by introducing new forms of visual experience (Hanh, 2024).

However, the significance of AI lies not only in its pedagogical potential but in its structural function. It compensates for limitations in traditional teaching models, enabling institutions to manage increased enrolment more effectively.

At the same time, AI introduces ethical and conceptual challenges. Questions of authorship, originality, and artistic agency become more complex in algorithmic contexts. These issues require critical engagement within educational frameworks, ensuring that technological integration does not undermine the conceptual foundations of art practice.

Thus, AI should be understood as both a pedagogical innovation and a structural adjustment shaped by AISHE evidenced expansion.

## **8. Art Market Transformation through the Lens of AISHE**

The transformation of the Indian art market must also be interpreted in relation to AISHE data. The expansion of fine arts education increases the number of trained artists entering the field, thereby reshaping the dynamics of artistic production and circulation.



Historically, artistic production in India was supported by systems of patronage embedded in religious and royal institutions. Contemporary art, however, operates within market driven networks involving galleries, auction houses, and digital platforms (Chowdhury, 2021).

Recent reports highlight the growth of the Indian art market, including increased participation, diversification of artistic categories, and global visibility (Assign Data Sciences, 2025). While these developments are often attributed to globalisation and technological change, AISHE data suggests that they are also linked to the expansion of the educational system.

A larger number of graduates entering the creative economy intensifies competition and necessitates new modes of differentiation. Artists must develop skills in digital presentation, networking, and self promotion to navigate this environment.

However, educational institutions have not fully adapted to these requirements. Curricula often remain focused on traditional studio practices, with limited emphasis on professional competencies. This creates a mismatch between training and market expectations.

The art market, therefore, should not be viewed as an external force shaping education. Rather, it is part of a broader system in which educational expansion plays a significant role. AISHE data provides the foundation for understanding this relationship.

## **9. NEP 2020 as a Policy Response to Structural Realities**

The National Education Policy 2020 introduces a framework for reforming higher education in India, emphasising multidisciplinary learning, digital integration, and research development. These priorities align closely with the challenges identified through AISHE data.

The policy's emphasis on interdisciplinary education reflects the need to move beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries, enabling students to engage with diverse forms of knowledge. For fine arts education, this creates opportunities to integrate art with technology, media, and social sciences.

Similarly, the focus on digital learning aligns with the increasing importance of hybrid pedagogical models. The policy recognises the role of technology in expanding access and enhancing learning outcomes.

However, the relationship between NEP 2020 and AISHE data is not straightforward. The policy can be interpreted as a response to structural conditions revealed by AISHE, including expansion, imbalance, and the need for innovation. At the same time, its effectiveness depends on implementation.



AISHE data suggests that without addressing issues such as infrastructural limitations, faculty shortages, and regional disparities, policy initiatives may remain aspirational. The alignment between policy and data must therefore be actively pursued.

## **10. Reframing Transformation: From Innovation to Structural Alignment**

The analysis presented in this paper challenges conventional narratives of transformation in art education. Rather than attributing change to innovation in pedagogy, technology, or policy, it emphasises the role of structural conditions revealed by AISHE data.

Pedagogical shifts, including the adoption of digital and hybrid models, emerge as responses to increased enrolment and institutional constraints. The integration of artificial intelligence reflects the need for scalable teaching tools. Market transformation is linked to the growing number of graduates entering the creative economy. Policy reforms such as NEP 2020 respond to these broader dynamics.

This reframing shifts the focus from innovation to alignment. The key question is not how to introduce new methods or technologies, but how to align educational practices with the realities documented in AISHE data.

Such alignment requires a rethinking of curriculum, institutional organisation, and resource allocation. It also demands a critical engagement with the relationship between education, market, and technology.

## **11. Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that AISHE data provides a critical foundation for understanding the transformation of fine arts education in India. The near doubling of enrolment over a decade reveals both expansion and imbalance, shaping the conditions within which pedagogy, market, and policy operate.

The central argument has been that transformation must be read through AISHE data first, and only then through other frameworks. This data centred approach reveals that many contemporary developments are responses to structural pressures rather than independent innovations.

The implications of this argument are significant. Reform in art education must be grounded in empirical realities, addressing issues of institutional capacity, curricular relevance, and resource distribution. Without such grounding, efforts to innovate risk remaining disconnected from the conditions they seek to transform.



The future of fine arts education in India depends on this reorientation. By aligning pedagogical and policy initiatives with data evidenced realities, institutions can move beyond expansion towards meaningful transformation.

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