International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

Reimagining Indian Schooling: A Three-Pathway Education Model After Class 5

Aleena Roy
Social Science & Education Policy India

Abstract- Education shapes the confidence, skills, and future of every young citizen. However, in India, the traditional schooling structure still evaluates almost all students using a single measure: written academic examinations. Although recent reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced a 5+3+3+4 structure to promote holistic learning, sports and fine arts remain treated as secondary hobbies rather than serious career pathways in most middle schools. This research paper proposes a new structural reform for Indian education starting after Class 5. Under this model, all students study a unified, foundational curriculum up to Class 5. At the conclusion of Class 5, students undergo a balanced evaluation that combines a practical and written aptitude test with a comprehensive review of their five-year school journey portfolio. Based on this evaluation and their personal strengths, students enter one of three specialized types of schools from Class 6 onward: (1) Major Academics Schools, (2) Major Sports with Minor Academics Schools, and (3) Major Fine Arts with Minor Academics Schools. By integrating essential academic literacy into every pathway while giving specialized training to young thinkers, athletes, and artists from age eleven, this model aims to reduce examination stress, nurture diverse talents, and build a balanced, skilled generation.

Keywords: Indian Education System, Post-Class 5 Specialization, Holistic Assessment, SportsEducation, Fine Arts Curriculum, NEP 2020, Student Portfolio

I. Introduction

Every child enters school with a distinct combination of curiosity, energy, and natural ability. In any Class 8 classroom across India, one can find students who effortlessly solve algebraic equations, students who show remarkable stamina and strategy on the football field, and students who express deep emotion through classical dance, vocal music, painting, or theatre. Despite this rich diversity of human intelligence, the conventional school system largely forces every student onto a single, narrow track focused almost entirely on textbook memorization and written tests.In most Indian schools, physical education and fine arts are limited to one or two periods per week. When an aspiring sprinter, swimmer, violinist, or stage actor has to spend six to seven hours every day memorizing definitions and preparing for pen-and-paper tests, they are left with very little time or energy to practice their true craft. Over time, many gifted students begin to feel that their natural talents have no value because those talents do not appear on a traditional report card.As a student experiencing middle school firsthand, I observe how academic pressure affects my peers. Many capable students lose self-confidence simply because their strengths lie outside conventional classroom subjects. This research paper explores a practical way to restructure Indian schooling so that academics, sports, and fine arts receive equal institutional respect, dedicated infrastructure, and structured training right from Class 6.

II. Background and Review of the Current System

To understand why a new school structure is needed, it is helpful to examine how the Indian education framework currently operates and what reforms have already been attempted.

International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

For several decades, Indian schooling followed the 10+2 system, where all students studied identical subjects until Class 10 and chose specialized streams (Science, Commerce, or Humanities) only in Class 11. Recognizing the limits of rote learning, the Ministry of Education introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which replaced the 10+2 structure with a 5+3+3+4 curricular framework covering ages 3 to 18 (Ministry of Education, 2020). NEP 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, critical thinking, and removing rigid separations between curricular and extracurricular activities.

Similarly, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has introduced Art-Integrated Learning and Health and Physical Education guidelines to encourage overall personality development (CBSE, 2019). Educational psychologists, such as Howard Gardner, have also demonstrated through the Theory of Multiple Intelligences that human beings possess different kinds of intelligence—including logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence—rather than a single general intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

However, despite positive policy intentions, four major challenges persist in everyday school life:

- Examination-Centric Evaluation: Promotions, scholarships, and social praise still depend overwhelmingly on marks scored in written term examinations rather than practical mastery or creative output.
- Insufficient Training Hours for Non-Academic Fields: Two periods a week of games or music cannot develop a student into a national-level athlete or a professional performing artist. Serious skill development requires daily, structured coaching.
- Late Specialization: Waiting until Class 11 (age 16 or 17) to let students focus on their strengths is often too late for sports and fine arts, where peak physical coordination, muscle memory, and artistic foundation must be built between ages 11 and 15.
- Psychological Stress and Low Self-Esteem: Students whose strengths are kinesthetic or artistic often experience chronic anxiety when judged solely by academic grades, leading to disengagement from school.

III. Research Objectives and Methodology

The primary objective of this research study is to design a clear, fair, and practical school structure for India that nurtures academic, athletic, and artistic talents equally without sacrificing foundational literacy and numeracy.

Specifically, this paper aims to:

- Define a two-stage schooling structure consisting of a unified primary foundation (up to Class 5) followed by three specialized school pathways from Class 6 onward.
- Design a fair, stress-free Class 5 placement mechanism that values a student's five-year school journey alongside an aptitude test.
- Outline the curriculum balance (Major and Minor subjects), daily timetable, and infrastructure required for each of the three school types.
- Identify potential social and administrative challenges and propose practical solutions for smooth implementation.

Methodology: This research is based on a qualitative policy analysis of NEP 2020 guidelines, CBSE middle-school curriculum frameworks, educational psychology literature on multiple intelligences, and direct student observation of peer learning habits, time allocation, and co-curricular participation in a middle-school environment.

International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

IV. The Proposed Model: Post-Class 5 Three-Pathway Structure

The core idea of this reform is to divide school education into a common exploratory stage up to Class 5, followed by a specialized three-pathway stage from Class 6 to Class 12.

1. Phase 1 : The Common Foundation Stage (Pre-Primary to Class 5)

Until the completion of Class 5 (approximately age 11), all children study together in regular primary schools under a single, unified curriculum. During these formative years, no child is labeled or separated. The goals of Phase 1 are:

- Core Academic Literacy: Building strong foundations in reading, writing, spoken languages, foundational mathematics, and environmental awareness.
- Broad Exposure Without Pressure: Every primary school will provide weekly hands-on classes in athletics, team games, vocal and instrumental music, dance, drama, and visual arts so children can discover what genuinely excites them.
- Continuous Observation: Primary teachers act as mentors who observe each child's natural inclinations, curiosity, teamwork, and persistence across all three domains.

2. Phase 2: The Class 5 Holistic Evaluation and Journey Review

At the end of Class 5, students transition to specialized schooling. Instead of relying on a single high-pressure written exam, placement into one of the three school types is determined through a balanced, two-part evaluation system:

Evaluation Component	Weightage	What Is Assessed and How It Works
1 . Five-Year School Journey Portfolio (Class 1 to Class 5)	50%	A cumulative digital and physical record maintained by primary teachers over five years. It tracks daily class participation, project work, sports day events, art exhibitions, stage performances, teacher feedback, and steady effort rather than one-day performance.
2. Multi-Domain Aptitude Assessment	50%	A practical and written diagnostic evaluation conducted at the end of Class 5. It includes three equal modules: (a) logical reasoning and language comprehension, (b) physical fitness, agility, and motor coordination trials, and (c) creative expression in music, movement, drama, or visual art.

Following this evaluation, school counselors meet with the student and their parents to discuss the results. The final school placement combines the student's demonstrated aptitude, their five-year journey record, and the student's own personal interest.

3. Phase 3: The Three Types of Specialized Schools (Class 6 Onwards)

From Class 6 through Class 12, students attend one of three distinct types of schools. Crucially, every school type maintains a "Major + Minor" curriculum structure so that no student ever misses out on essential life skills and basic academic knowledge.

School Type	Major Focus (Approx. 70% Time)	Minor Focus (Approx. 30% Time)	Specialized Facilities
1 . Major Academics School	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History,	General Physical Fitness, Yoga,	Advanced science and computer laboratories, research

International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

	Geography, Economics, Languages, Coding, Robotics, and Scientific Research.	Recreational Sports, and Creative Hobby Clubs.	libraries, debate halls, and Olympiad training centers.
2. Major Sports School (with Minor Academics)	Track and Field, Team Sports (Cricket, Football, Hockey, Basketball), Swimming, Badminton, Physical Conditioning, Sports Nutrition, and Sports Psychology.	Essential Languages (English & Hindi/Regional), Practical Mathematics, General Science, Civic Studies, and Financial Literacy.	Standardized athletics tracks, indoor stadiums, swimming pools, physiotherapy clinics, and certified national coaches.

School Type	Major Focus (Approx. 70% Time)	Minor Focus (Approx. 30% Time)	Specialized Facilities
3. Major Fine Arts School (with Minor Academics)	Classical & Contemporary Dance, Vocal & Instrumental Music, Drama & Theatre Arts, Painting, Sculpture, Digital Design, and Stage Production.	Essential Languages (English & Hindi/Regional), Practical Mathematics, Cultural History, and Financial Literacy.	Soundproof music practice rooms, sprung-floor dance studios, black-box theatres, art galleries, and design labs.

V. Curriculum Design and Daily Schedule Comparison

To illustrate how a student's daily routine would change under this model, the table below compares a typical six-hour school day across the three specialized school pathways from Class 6 onward:

Daily Time Block	Major Academics School	Major Sports School	Major Fine Arts School
Morning Session	Core STEM & Language	Morning Physical	Morning
(2.5 Hours)	Seminars (Math, Science,	Conditioning, Track Drills	Vocal/Instrumental Riyaz,
	Literature)	& Sport-Specific Practice	Dance Technique, or
			Studio Sketching
Mid-Day Session	Social Sciences,	Minor Academics:	Minor Academics:
(2.0 Hours)	Laboratory Experiments &	Functional Math, English,	Functional Math, English,
	Coding Projects	Science & Financial	History & Financial
		Literacy	Literacy
Afternoon Session	Minor Focus: Physical	Tactical Match Play,	Ensemble Rehearsals,
(1.5 Hours)	Education, Sports Games	Sports Nutrition,	Theatre Workshop,
	& Arts Clubs	Physiotherapy & Video	Exhibition Curation &
		Analysis	Digital Media

Notice how the "Minor Academics" component in Sports and Fine Arts schools is purposefully designed around real-world usefulness. Every athlete and artist graduates knowing how to communicate clearly in multiple languages, manage contracts and personal finances, understand basic science and health, and use modern digital tools responsibly.

International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

VI. Expected Benefits of the Three-Pathway Model

Adopting this three-pathway education structure after Class 5 offers transformative benefits for individual students, families, and the nation as a whole:

- Dignity and Equal Status for All Talents: When the government and school boards establish dedicated, well-funded schools for Sports and Fine Arts alongside Academic schools, society naturally begins to view athletes and artists as serious professionals rather than students who "could not cope with studies."
- Reduction in Academic Anxiety and Burnout: Millions of Indian students suffer from exam stress because they are forced to compete in subjects that do not match their natural strengths. Placing students in environments aligned with their abilities makes learning joyful, builds genuine self-confidence, and improves classroom attendance.
- Early Excellence on Global Platforms: In international competitions such as the Olympic Games, Asian Games, international music conservatories, and global film and design industries, top performers begin focused training in early adolescence. Starting specialized training in Class 6 (age 11) gives Indian students a crucial seven-year advantage before adulthood.
- Prevention of Narrow Illiteracy Through Minor Academics: Unlike dropping out of school to pursue sports or arts privately, this model keeps every student inside a structured school community where they earn a recognized Class 10 and Class 12 certificate with solid minor academic literacy.
- Fairness Through the Five-Year Journey Portfolio: Because Class 5 placement weighs five years of consistent effort equally with an aptitude test, a student who suffers from test anxiety or a minor illness on exam day will not lose their opportunity.

1. Challenges, Limitations, and Practical Solutions

Any major reform in a country as large and diverse as India will face practical obstacles. A realistic research proposal must anticipate these challenges and provide workable solutions:

Potential Challenge	Why It Happens	Practical Policy Solution
1. Parental Skepticism and Social Bias	Many parents worry that choosing Sports or Fine Arts in Class 6 may limit stable job opportunities later in life.	Conduct mandatory career-awareness workshops in Classes 4 and 5 showcasing thriving careers in sports management, coaching, physiotherapy, animation, music production, architecture, and performing arts, alongside college admission quotas for specialized graduates.
2. Changing Interests During Adolescence	An 11 -year-old student might enter a Sports school in Class 6 but discover a passion for Science or Fine Arts by Class 8.	Introduce a flexible "Class 8 Bridge Assessment" and foundation bridge modules, allowing students to transfer between school pathways at the end of Class 8 without losing an academic year.
Potential Challenge	Why It Happens	Practical Policy Solution
3. Infrastructure and Funding Costs	Building three separate specialized campuses in every town and village immediately requires massive financial investment.	Implement a "Three-Wing Campus Model" in existing large schools, where one campus shares administrative buildings while dividing into Academic, Sports, and Fine Arts wings, supported by shared district-level stadiums and arts centers.

International Journal for Research Trends in Social Science & Humanities
ISSN: 2584-2455
Volume 4, Issue 6
Nov-Oct-2026, PP 1-6

4. Risk of Bias in Portfolio Grading	Primary school teachers might unintentionally favor certain students when recording the five-year journey portfolio.	Use standardized, transparent rubrics across all schools and require a three-member review panel (class teacher, sports coach, and arts teacher) to verify each student's Class 5 portfolio.

VIII. Conclusion

An education system should act like a prism that reveals every child's brightest colors, not a factory mold that forces every student into the exact same shape. While India has taken encouraging steps toward holistic learning through NEP 2020, true transformation requires changing the structural design of middle and secondary schooling.

By keeping education unified and exploratory up to Class 5, evaluating students fairly through both a five-year journey portfolio and a multi-domain aptitude test, and opening three specialized pathways

- —Major Academics, Major Sports with Minor Academics, and Major Fine Arts with Minor Academics
- —from Class 6 onward, India can unlock the full potential of its youth. This balanced framework guarantees essential life literacy for every citizen while empowering young scholars, athletes, and artists to pursue excellence without fear or compromise.

References

1. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). (2019). Circular on Art-Integrated Learning and Mainstreaming Health and Physical Education in Schools. New Delhi: CBSE Academic Unit.
2. Gardner, H. (1983). Frames ofMind: The Theory ofMultiple Intelligences. New York: Basic Books.
3. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. New Delhi: Government of India.