Institutional Policy vs. Ground Reality: An Empirical Study of Structural Instability and Teachers' Dependence in Art Education in Schools of Mizoram

Lalrozara[1], Dr. Abhijit Kumar Mohanty[2]
[1]*Research Scholar, Amity School of Fine Arts, Amity University Haryana. Amity University Haryana.*
[2] *PhD Guide, Assistant Professor, Amity School of Fine Arts, Amity University Haryana.*
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***Abstract*—National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Mizoram has been instrumental in making progressive curricula directions by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), the Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE), and the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET). The 10 Bagless Days (Nun Kawng Sialna Bu), Work Education Guidebooks, and Kala Utsav policies are examples of attempts to make visual arts, performing arts, and pre-vocational skills an integral part of the elementary and secondary curriculum. Nevertheless, the empirical evaluations of these fields show a critical gap between the policy infrastructure and the practical implementation. Based on the analysis of curriculum frameworks in the region and empirical feedback of 65 pilot schools in Mizoram, this study highlights that the process of art education in the state lacks operational stability. The instability of the art education process can be explained by three main aspects, the use of general academic teachers due to lack of approved positions of art educators, discretionary policy language leading to ambiguities in institutions, and critical spatial, material, and time constraints. As a result, the process of art education becomes sporadic and dependent on the personal interest of available teachers rather than standards of pedagogics.**

***Index Terms*—Art Education, Educational Reform, Mizoram Schools, Pre-Vocational Education, Structural Instability, Teacher Availability,**

I. INTRODUCTION

Context and Background

Education in arts is fundamental in facilitating the overall development of school going children including holistic personality formation, emotional maturity, fine motor coordination, cultural sustenance and creativity in problem solving. In North-East India especially in the state of Mizoram, there are diverse traditions and cultures in textiles weavings (puan tah), basketry or weaving of bamboo & canes (hnang tah), folk music and dances. Recognizing the opportunity, the authorities in Mizoram have ensured that their state curriculum framework is in tandem with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. According to The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), the arts, humanities and vocational education should be integrated in order to break artificial barriers between academics and co-curricular activities. To this end, the state educational agencies such as the Directorate of SCERT Mizoram, Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) and DIET Aizawl have developed comprehensive curricular guidebooks on various topics. These include Nun Kawng Sialna Bu (2025) for Middle Stage Pre-Vocational Education, Guidebook for Work Education at different stages i.e. Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stages (2025), High School Art Education Curriculum (2009), and directives for the Kala Utsav Art Festival annually.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In spite of all these detailed guidelines, it is true from the field data collected from primary, middle, and secondary schools in Mizoram that there is a large gap between theory and practice. Art education, as it is practiced in various schools, appears to be marked by structural instability. In place of being a part of the regular curriculum of the time table, the way art education is imparted varies greatly from one school to another. It is a marginal activity whose practice is

based entirely on the presence of a teacher with an interest in art within the school.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To critically analyze the institutional policy frameworks governing art and work education in Mizoram (SCERT, MBSE, DIET).
2. To evaluate ground-level implementation variability, resource accessibility, and structural bottlenecks across urban and rural schools in Mizoram.
3. To investigate the impact of non-specialized general academic teacher assignment on instructional continuity and pedagogical quality.
4. To formulate concrete, contextualized policy recommendations for institutionalizing art education, including itinerant specialist deployment, direct grants, and community artisan integration.

IV. CURRICULAR ARCHITECTURE AND POLICY MANDATES IN MIZORAM

In order to assess the operational gaps, it is imperative that we consider the hierarchical framework of institutions set up by the educational administration of Mizoram. These have been provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: State Curricular Frameworks for Art and Pre-Vocational Education in Mizoram

Mandate & Authority	Target School Stage	Prescribed Modality & Allocation	Core Curricular Components
SCERT Mizoram: *Nun Kawng Sialna Bu* (2025)	Middle Stage *(Classes 5–8)*	10 Bagless Days per session (Term I: 4 days, Term II: 3 days, Term III: 3 days).	Performing Arts, Arts & Crafts, Pre-Vocational Skills (carpentry, tailoring, electrics), Field Visits.
DIET Aizawl: *Work Education Guidebooks*	Foundational to Secondary *(Ages 3–18)*	Integrated practical *sessions* and	Fine/gross motor skills, traditional weaving
Mandate & Authority	Target School Stage	Prescribed Modality & Allocation	Core Curricular Components
(2025)		stage-wise skill progression.	(*puan tah*), cane work (*hnang tah*), hydroponics, first aid.
MBSE: *High School Curriculum* (2009)	Secondary Stage *(Classes 9–10)*	Formal co-curricular allocation distinct from Work Education.	2D/3D Visual Arts, Music, Movement/Dance, Drama, local cultural heritage appreciation.
MHRD / NCERT / Samagra Shiksha: *Kala Utsav Guidelines*	Secondary & Higher Secondary *(Classes 9–12)*	District, State, and National competitive showcases & e-projects.	Preservation of Living Art Traditions (folk music, *Cheraw*, *Chheihlam*, traditional 3D sculptures, indigenous games).

This policy framework for Middle Schools (Classes 5 to 8) in the state of SCERT Mizoram clearly includes Para 4.26 of NEP 2020. It requires that there be ten "Bagless Days" per academic year which will be distributed among three terms as follows: Four Bagless Days in First Term, Three Bagless Days in Second Term, and Three Bagless Days in Third Term. Curriculum areas of focus are divided into four core

areas: Performing Arts (vocal/instrumental music including khuang beats and acoustic guitar keys), Arts & Crafts (stitching, clay modeling, block printing, paper art), Pre-Vocational Skills (carpentry, hand weaving, yarn preparation, tailoring, basic repairs around the house) and Field Visits/Projects (kitchen gardening, sanitation campaigns, market survey). Documentation after each activity is stressed in this policy framework, it expects schools to document activities in standardized reporting forms and submit their annual documentation to Sub-Divisional Educational Officers (SDEOs). In addition to SCERT requirements, DIET Aizawl prepared a series of Work Education Guidebooks covering four developmental stages. Foundational Stage (ages 3-8): Gross and Fine Motor Development, Sensory Experiences, Lacing Shoes, Sorting Toys. The Preparatory Stage (ages 8-11) teaches basic craftsmanship, simple cooking, managing of the laundry, tying knots (reef knot and clove hitch), and simple gardening. The Middle Stage (ages 11-14) involves learning advanced knots (bowline and sheet bend), traditional Mizo cotton processing (la her, la sai, la chawn, la hmui, la dinlek), box making, and soil and water testing. The Secondary Stage (ages 14-18) stresses vocational simulation, digital storytelling, vertical gardening using bottle towers, advanced Mizo loom weaving (puan ban, puan tah), business modeling, and first aid emergency responses.

The Art Education Curriculum of the MBSE curriculum in the high school stage (Classes 9 and 10) considers Art Education to be a vital part of wholesome personality development. In the curriculum, Work Education is separated from Creative Arts and it is stressed that art education should develop aesthetic sensitivity, non-verbal communication, and creative expressions using local available resources. Simultaneously, Kala Utsav guidelines issued by the NCERT and implemented at the state and district level in Mizoram for classes 9 to 12. They focus on preserving "Living Art Traditions," such as classical/folk music (*Buizova Zai*, *Lunglen Zai*), traditional dances (*Cheraw*, *Chheihlam*, *Sarlamkai*), visual arts (2D and 3D eco-friendly sculptures of Mizo folklore characters like *Chhurbura* or *Pheichham*), and indigenous games (*Kawibah*, *Kalchhet*).

V. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND DATA BASELINE

For assessing the coherence between policy and its practical implementation, this study integrates the qualitative and quantitative evaluation findings gathered during state-wide curricula review and pilot tests. The main empirical basis is the 2025 pilot test undertaken by DIET Aizawl through 65 schools (47 schools in urban Aizawl and 18 schools in surrounding districts) covering elementary, middle, and secondary levels.

The evaluation model considered four structural parameters of implementation process among participating schools:

1. The degree of compliance with curricula in terms of undertaking prescribed activity modules and bagless day program.
2. The qualification and availability of teachers responsible for teaching the art and work education modules.
3. The availability of infrastructure, equipment, specialized art rooms, and consumable raw material.
4. The allocation of instructional time to non-academic disciplines in school master schedule, especially during examination stress period.

The data consolidation process included cross verification with headmaster responses, teacher evaluation logs, SDEO submission reports, and curriculum text policy (Nun Kawng Sialna Bu and DIET Guide books).

VI. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES

There is a clear disparity in the findings of the empirical research regarding the policies and their implications in practice. Even though the framework of policies presents a coherent and well-thought-out step-by-step approach in art education, the actual implementation in the educational institutions of Mizoram is quite weak and sporadic. Pilot study measures show that even though the students' interest in practical art classes is extremely high (95.38%) and 93.84% of art activities do not require financial expenditure to be carried out, numerous operational impediments remain. More specifically, 38.46% of the institutions lack adequate supplies, 30.77% have never

had structured classes, and 18.47% could not maintain regular timetables.

VII. INSTITUTIONAL DISCRETION AND POLICY DILUTION

The first and foremost structural weakness stems from the policy text itself. As stated on page 4 of the policy document SCERT Nun Kawng Sialna Bu: "Nun Kawng Sialna Bu hi kaihhruaina bu a nih angin a ṭul dan azir leh sikul hmun hma azirin her rem theih a ni" ("Since it is a guide book, it can be changed or adjusted according to necessity and infrastructure of the school"). While it was meant to give flexibility to the school authorities in rural areas due to lack of resources, it is actually working as an institutional loophole. The flexibility is used by school authorities to change compulsory Art education classes into optional ones. Due to backlogs in academics, the Headmasters of the schools often cancel Bagless Day and Work Education periods and use those hours for teaching subjects such as Mathematics and English.

VIII. TEACHER AVAILABILITY AND THE INSTABILITY PARADIGM

The foremost reason responsible for the operational problem is the total lack of an authorized group of Art Teachers in the great majority of public and government aided schools of Mizoram. According to data collected through the DIET Pilot project, the common requirement put forward by all school administrators is that "Arts teacher te, music teacher, etc te hi school tinah post theih ni se" ("Art teachers, Music teachers, etc., dedicated posts must be created in all schools"). The absence of such dedicated posts makes it necessary for school principals to assign art and pre-vocational lessons to general academic teachers (Science, Social Science, Mathematics or Language teachers). The problem thus results in the following three operational failures:

1. Pedagogic Disconnection: Academic teachers in general lack formal qualification in visual fine arts, traditional weaving (la her/sai), acoustic music lessons, and carpentry. In case a teacher is assigned to teach an art lesson, he/she prefers to engage students in copying textbook illustrations instead of teaching practical skills such as cross-stitch, scallop stitch or block printing.
2. Teacher's Resistance and Stress: Teachers regard teaching of art as yet another unremunerated task distracting them from their major duty of completing extensive academic syllabuses.
3. Catastrophic Functional Unpredictability: It completely depends on the personal teacher's presence and attitude whether the art lessons will take place at all. For example, if the school happens to have a science teacher interested in guitar or woodworking, he/she provides the students with plenty of artistic experience. Otherwise, if the teacher gets transferred somewhere else, the art department of the school stops functioning immediately.

IX. SPATIAL, MONETARY AND MATERIAL SHORTAGES

According to the results obtained from the empirical pilot survey, 38.46% of schools had inadequate supplies of basic implements, craft supplies and learning materials. Although 93.84% of schools were able to carry out simple activities with the use of improvised free materials, more complex vocational modules like soil testing kits, carpentry tools, baking machines, weaving looms and art canvasses could only be performed when there is adequate government funding.

Moreover, spatial shortage exacerbates the problem. In many primary and middle schools in Mizoram, whether in crowded urban centers like Aizawl or isolated rural centers like Siaha, classes are conducted within small buildings where thin wooden planks separate each class room. The absence of an art studio, science laboratory or any available open space means conducting loud or space-consuming activities like drumming (khuang vuak), carpentry (perek chhut) and vertical gardening would interrupt the lessons in nearby classroom.

X. MARGINALIZATION OF TIME TABLE AND EXAM-DRIVEN APPROACH

While 81.53% of pilot institutions had set aside provisional time table slots during the experiment, 13.84% experienced the complete lack of assigning regular period due to congested time table schedule. On the other hand, 6.15% attributed heavy academic burden as an absolute hindrance for conducting pre-vocational activities.

The trend becomes more evident in the High School level (classes 9 and 10). As the students get closer to the HSLC exams conducted by the MBSE, institutional pressure builds up to increase the pass percentage in the exams, and the Head Masters allocate the hours designated for art and work education for additional academic coaching. A study on educational interests of secondary students in Champhai district reveals that students, especially girls, have their peak interest in the study of Fine Arts, whereas the interest in pure technology is relatively low.

XI. STAGE-WISE ANALYSIS OF CURRICULAR EXECUTION

The disparity between the prescription and reality in the context of structures takes on its own unique form in relation to the various levels of education. Table 2 shows this disparity for Mizoram schools.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Curricular Intent versus Field Reality Across Educational Stages

Educational Stage	Prescribed Curricular Focus	Prescribed Modality & Time Allocation	Field Implementation Reality	Primary Operational Bottlenecks
Foundational Stage *(Ages 3–8 / Pre-Primary to Class 2)*	Sensory/motor development, basic hygiene, shoe-lace tying, toy sorting, simple storytelling.	Play-based, informal daily integration woven into foundational literacy/numeracy.	Executed casually; treated as unstructured playtime rather than targeted skill building.	Lack of early childhood art training among primary teachers; cramped classrooms.
Preparatory Stage *(Ages 8–11 / Classes 3 to 5)*	Basic craft stalls, knot tying (*reef, clove hitch*), simple cooking/salads, basic stitching.	Structured weekly activity periods; hands-on group tasks.	High student enthusiasm but sporadic delivery; activities often skipped during rainy seasons or exams.	Material shortages (38.46% schools); absence of dedicated craft supplies or budget.
Middle Stage *(Ages 11–14 / Classes 6 to 8)*	10 Bagless Days (*Nun Kawng Sialna Bu*); traditional weaving (*la her/sai*), carpentry, guitar, soil testing.	10 dedicated days per year (4 in Term 1, 3 in Term 2, 3 in Term 3); annual SDEO reporting.	Highly erratic execution; 30.77% of schools had no prior history of conducting such modules.	Non-specialized academic teachers assigned to complex technical modules; zero art posts.
Secondary Stage *(Ages 14–18 / Classes 9 to 12)*	MBSE Art Curriculum & Kala Utsav; living art traditions, 2D/3D visual arts, digital media, business modeling.	Formal class periods; state and national level competitive showcases.	Mostly limited to top performers selected for *Kala Utsav* competitions; general student body excluded.	Systemic pressure for HSLC/HSSLC exams; complete diversion of art hours to academic subjects.

XII. STRATEGIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of School Education, Government of Mizoram, working together with Samagra Shiksha, will have to approve specific posts for professional teachers of Art, Music, and Craft classes. Given that it may be financially unfeasible to have a full-time art teacher for each primary school, there should be a

Cluster-Based Itinerant Art Specialist system developed. In accordance with this approach, specialists for art and music teaching are hired on the educational block or cluster level. Each specialist is given a group of 3-5 schools which he visits in a regular way on certain days to teach the standard practical program.

In order to address the problem of 38.46% material deficit rate found through pilot studies, the government should create a non-lapsable Annual Art & Pre-Vocational Material Grant for all public elementary and middle schools. Alongside this, SCERT and DIETs should develop standardized and portable "Art & Pre-Vocational Toolkits," consisting of the following tools:

- Craft & Textile Kit: Hand-looms, raw materials (la), wood carving chisels, yarns, embroidery hoops, safety scissors, fabric paints.
- Pre-Vocational Kit: Claw hammers, various nails, sandpaper, soil testing pH kits, basic first aid training materials.
- Visual & Performing Arts Kit: Acoustic guitars, Mizo drums (khuang), canvas boards, clay, watercolors, chart papers.

Mizoram is gifted with tremendous talent among its locals when it comes to artistry. This has been explicitly stated in SCERT policy, which says, “Pawl 5-8 inkar zirlai zawng zawngte chuan iptê ah loh ni chhung hian an awmna vengchhung/khawtlanga thiamna bik nei: mistiri, huan enkawltu, bel siamtu, electric siamtu, thirchhertu te hnen aṭang ngeiin zirtirna an dawng tur a ni” ("Students must receive direct instruction from local skilled artisans in their village/locality: carpenters, gardeners, potters, electricians, blacksmiths"). In order to operationalize this guideline, SMCs need to be provided with honorarium funds to officially engage master artisans, traditional weavers (puan tah thiam), cane weavers (hnang tah thiam), and folk musicians as guest teachers.”

In order to avoid such a situation, SCERT and MBSE need to make it mandatory for schools to allot specific, non-negotiable timetables. The 10 Bagless Days need to be specifically allotted in the MBSE state academic calendar, thus making it impossible for schools to conduct any academic examinations or coaching classes on those specific days. Additionally, the auditing process for the logging process started by Nun Kawng Sialna Bu, wherein schools fill post-activity reporting forms with high-resolution photographs of the event to the SDEOs needs to be enforced strictly.

XIII. CONCLUSION

Mizoram’s art and pre-vocational education programs are currently facing an important structural juncture. On the one hand, the state’s educational administrators have developed an outstandingly progressive, cultural and age-appropriate program for art education in accordance with NEP 2020 directives. On the other hand, the lack of structural resilience due to, among other factors, the complete lack of sanctioned art teachers, material insufficiency, spatial limitations, and structural ambivalence makes the process of art education unstable and unpredictable. The reliance of art education on the availability of general academic teachers with personal artistic inclinations poses a threat to educational equality because children from schools that lack sufficient resources and personnel do not get access to such cognitive, sensory, emotional, and practical experience as art education provides. In order to transform the current system of art education from unstable and unpredictable to resilient and equal, it is necessary to undertake structural action. Through the development of special cadres of itinerant art teachers, granting of materials directly to schools, partnership with local artisans, and adherence to proper administration, it will be possible for the state to bring the policy design and educational practice closer together.

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