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# The International Baccalaureate Primary and Middle Years Programmes: Alignment with India's National Education Policy and National Curriculum Framework

## *Summary*

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March 2026

## Background

This study evaluates alignment between the International Baccalaureate's (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) and India's education system, as outlined in the *National Education Policy 2020* (Government of India, 2020) and the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023* (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks, 2023). Specifically, the study examines alignment across key dimensions of the two education systems, namely, their philosophical foundations, curricular and pedagogical approaches, structural organization, subject areas and assessment practices.

In India, the *National Education Policy 2020* introduced significant reforms aimed at creating a more holistic, flexible and learner-centred education system. A key shift under the policy was the restructuring of the school curriculum. The new structure comprises the five-year Foundational Stage (ages 3–8), the three-year Preparatory Stage (ages 8–11), the three-year Middle Stage (ages 11–14) and the four-year Secondary Stage (ages 14–18). The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023* further advances this approach by specifying the curriculum, pedagogical approaches and assessment practices aligned with these stages.

## Methodology

Ecctis employed a comparative methodology specifically developed for this study, based on a systematic review of key PYP, MYP and Indian policy and curriculum documents (*National Education Policy 2020* and *National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023*). A thematic analysis was conducted to compare philosophical underpinnings, pedagogy, educational structures, subject areas, language learning and assessment across corresponding stages. Key thematic areas were identified from relevant sections of both the IB and Indian curriculum documents and served as the basis for comparison. Content from each framework was then mapped to these themes and analysed to identify shared and distinctive features and to determine the overall degree of alignment.

## Key findings

### Philosophical underpinnings

The philosophical foundations of the PYP and MYP **strongly align** with those of the corresponding stages in the Indian framework (see figure 1). Both view education as a vehicle for holistic development that nurtures intellectual, social, emotional, ethical and creative capacities alongside academic learning. Additionally, each emphasize values such as empathy, integrity and respect for diversity, aiming to develop caring, reflective and responsible individuals.

At the same time, the IB provides distinctive frameworks, structures and tools that translate these principles into practice. For example, the PYP’s transdisciplinary programme of inquiry, explicit focus on learner agency, and action component offer structure for implementing integrated, inquiry-led and learner-centred learning. Similarly, the MYP employs inquiry processes, defined global contexts and concepts, an interdisciplinary learning and teaching framework, and components such as service as action to connect subjects to real-world contexts and develop learner values. While the two frameworks differ in their orientation toward citizenship, their underlying commitment to developing ethically grounded, globally aware learners remains aligned.



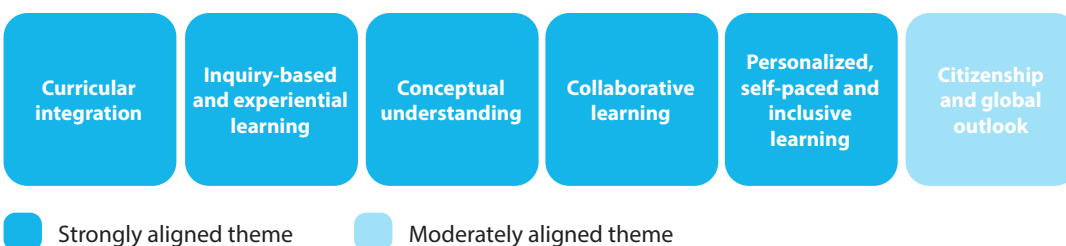
**Figure 1.** Summary of philosophical alignment by thematic area

## Pedagogy

The pedagogical approaches of the Indian and PYP and MYP frameworks are **strongly aligned**, sharing a focus on integrated learning, inquiry, conceptual understanding, collaborative learning, and personalized and inclusive practices (see figure 2).

The Foundational and Preparatory Stages align closely with the PYP’s transdisciplinary approach, particularly in the Foundational Stage. In both frameworks, learning progresses from play-based and experiential approaches in the early years to more formal and subject-specific inquiry in the Middle Stage and MYP.

The IB distinguishes itself through structured curricular models that systematize these pedagogical approaches, including transdisciplinary themes and units of inquiry in the PYP, and defined inquiry processes, key concepts, global contexts and interdisciplinary learning in the MYP. While both frameworks value culturally relevant, real-world learning, the Indian framework places greater emphasis on national and local rootedness, whereas the IB additionally prioritizes global contexts to foster international-mindedness.



**Figure 2.** Summary of pedagogical alignment by thematic area

## Educational and curricular structure

Structurally, the frameworks are compatible, covering largely the same subject areas and promoting similar forms of curricular integration.

The PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages are **moderately aligned**. A key structural difference is that India formally divides primary education into two distinct stages, Foundational and Preparatory, whereas the PYP provides an overarching curriculum framework. Both systems are developmentally informed and address early learner needs, while also covering similar subject areas in primary education.

While the MYP normally spans five years, it can be abbreviated to three years to match India's Middle Stage, resulting in **strong curricular alignment**. Both frameworks cover largely similar subject areas with comparable breadth of learning, while also including distinctive elements, such as the MYP design subject and India's Vocational curricular area.

## Subject area comparisons

### PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages

Overall, the comparative analysis of the learning expectations and content show that the PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages **share substantial similarities in all subject areas** (see figure 3).

Both the PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages prioritize students' social-emotional, physical, cognitive and creative development, with exploration, play and active inquiry embedded throughout, particularly in science, mathematics and social studies. They also support creative expression, communication and collaboration in subjects like the arts and personal, social and physical education. In language learning, both programmes emphasize the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing to support communication and cognitive development. However, the PYP places greater emphasis on critical thinking, reflection and inquiry skills, and more consistently integrates both local and global contexts.

	Learning expectations and content emphases
Art	Strongly aligned
Mathematics	Strongly aligned
Language	Strongly aligned
Science	Moderately aligned
Social studies	Moderately aligned
Personal, social and physical education	Strongly aligned

**Figure 3.** Summary of findings for each subject area of the PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages

## MYP and India's Middle Stage

Across subject areas, the **learning expectations** of the MYP and India's Middle Stage show **moderate overall alignment**, with stronger alignment in mathematics and science (see figure 4). Both frameworks share similar aims, skills and broad domains of knowledge, though they differ in emphasis. The MYP places greater weight on inquiry, reflection, independent investigation, analytical depth and real-world application, while the Middle Stage foregrounds Indian knowledge systems, cultural heritage and national contributions. **Content emphasis** across corresponding subjects is generally **moderately to strongly aligned**, particularly in the arts, mathematics, language and literature, and language acquisition, even though neither framework prescribes specific topics.

Structurally, both frameworks support integrated and project-based learning; however, the MYP formalizes these approaches more explicitly through dedicated components with defined aims, objectives and structures for inquiry and synthesis. While MYP design and Middle Stage Vocational Education both incorporate practical and project-based elements, they differ in intent, with design focused on innovation and the design process, and Vocational Education aimed at foundational exposure to work domains.

	Learning expectations	Content emphases
Art	Moderately aligned	Strongly aligned
Mathematics	Strongly aligned	Strongly aligned
Language and literature	Moderately aligned	Strongly aligned
Language acquisition	Moderately aligned	Strongly aligned
Humanities and social science	Moderately aligned	Moderately aligned
Science	Moderately-strongly aligned	Moderately-strongly aligned
Physical and health education	Moderately aligned	Moderately aligned
Design/Vocational Education	Weakly to moderately aligned	Weakly to moderately aligned

**Figure 4.** Summary of findings for each subject area of the MYP and India's Middle Stage

## Language learning approaches

The language learning approaches of the Indian and the PYP and MYP frameworks are **moderately aligned**. Both frameworks view language learning as foundational for communication, literacy, meaning-making, cognitive development and identity formation. The key difference is orientation: the IB emphasizes global and intercultural identity and teaches language through inquiry, while the Indian framework emphasizes national identity within a multilingual, culturally rooted context.

## Assessment

### Assessment principles

The Indian and PYP and MYP frameworks show **strong alignment** in assessment principles, prioritizing continuous, holistic and stage-appropriate assessment that is criteria-based, feedback-driven and focused on learners' progress. Both systems use a balanced combination of formative and summative approaches to support instructional decision-making and accommodate learner diversity. Distinctively, IB programmes place additional emphasis on collaborative and authentic assessment. In the PYP, students and teachers work together to monitor learning, while across the PYP and MYP assessment focuses on the application of learning in real-world and intercultural contexts, including the development of transferable and interdisciplinary skills.

### Assessment methods

Assessment methods in the PYP and India's Foundational and Preparatory Stages are **strongly aligned**, prioritizing teacher-led formative assessment based on observation and evidence of learning, with increasing use of oral, written and self-assessment in later years. Both place less emphasis on summative assessment; however, India includes end-of-year progression assessments in the Preparatory Stage, while the PYP uses distinctive tools that strengthen reflection and self-assessment and may optionally use standardized tests.

The MYP and India's Middle Stage show **moderate alignment** in assessment methods, with both using varied formative strategies and internal summative assessments. Key differences include the MYP's use of externally marked eAssessments and moderated projects, compared with the Middle Stage's emphasis on internally assessed annual summative examinations.

## Summary

Overall, the findings indicate that the PYP and MYP demonstrate moderate to strong alignment with the corresponding stages of the Indian education system, reflecting a high degree of compatibility. Both frameworks share a common educational vision, with differences arising primarily from emphasis—the IB adopts a stronger global orientation, while the Indian framework focuses more on national and local contexts.

The IB's distinctive contribution lies in its explicit frameworks and processes for translating shared principles into practice, supporting inquiry, critical thinking, conceptual understanding, learner agency, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning, and the development of IB learner values and attributes.

## References

Government of India. Ministry of Human Resource Development. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Available from: [https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/NEP\\_Final\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf)

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A copy of the full report is available at: [ibo.org/en/research](https://ibo.org/en/research). For more information on this study or other IB research, please email [research@ibo.org](mailto:research@ibo.org).

To cite the full report, please use: Ecctis. (2026). *The International Baccalaureate Primary and Middle Years Programmes: Alignment with India's National Education Policy and National Curriculum Framework*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

