

The Changed Reality of Design Education and Modes that Could Work for The Future

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Abstract— Today more than ever before the need for designers has become a way of life. From designing a party or being an event manager to partnering with engineers on all kinds of projects, knowledge of design is, in a manner of speaking, a prerequisite. Therefore, it is imperative that design education is rethought in all possible branches of Arts, Crafts and Engineering. From Bauhaus till now the design education has gone through a revolution globally and there is no reason for that revolution to slowdown or stop. We are only called to enhance the same by creating competent designers. Education being the foundation of a better tomorrow implies we do the same with design education. Paul Rand said, “Design is a way of life, a point of view. It involves the whole complex of visual communications: talent, creative ability, manual skill, and technical knowledge. Aesthetics and economics, technology and psychology are intrinsically related to the process.” As the maxim goes, “Well begun is half done,” there are no two ways of doing education. We need to be purpose driven with a clear vision and a sense of mission to ensure a universal approach towards design education across India along with a well calibrated design curriculum and we will be on our way to rewriting the history of design education in India.

Keywords- *Design, education, students, ability, industrial, curriculum, interior, society, industry, process, designers, technology, approach, skill*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is broadly understood that out of the two traditional teaching approaches Deductive and Inductive the inductive method is preferred for Design Education because in it an instructor presents students with scenarios and projects and encourages “noticing” instead of explanations; to build students’ knowledge and skills while incorporating the graduate attributes within the same while shifting the approach from teacher centered to learner centered.

Interestingly it is observed that of the many design institutions subscribing to this methodology in their curriculum many do not actually follow it, as “inductive method” seems to be a better way to impart design education as per the students of various design institutions. These students state that by inductive method of teaching learning process they tend to grasp things better and retain the experience. However it has come to light that the term is used only to snag new students.

There are more than 50 known design schools in Rajasthan including institutes and several universities offering certificates, diplomas and degrees in various design courses like interior design, fashion design, textile design, jewellery design, graphic design etc. Nonetheless, the university system continues to be dominated and designed for education in engineering with very little effort expanded to the study of design requirements. The general practice for education in design is that the institutions that advertise themselves for education in design are stand alone small entities (institutions) usually run by one person who decides the curriculum which he/she picks up from the internet and interprets it according to his/her understanding of the same. This is not surprising since the process of curriculum building is defined, yet there is no

monitoring system in place to ensure that this is actually followed. Moreover, the practicing designers are too preoccupied to take out time for the betterment of the design education and of the society. So it is left to the educators to create more sensitive designers who would take out some time for the society as well.

II. PROBLEM WITH DESIGN EDUCATION

A survey states that about 10,000 students graduate in India every year with degrees and diplomas from various disciplines of Design. Incidentally, this doesn’t seem to be a very large number, considering that the book, “Engineering Education in India” released in 2011 stated that in 2008 it was estimated that 3.5 lakh graduate, 23,000 post graduate and 1000 PhD’ degrees were awarded in Engineering in India. However, not many students with degree in design find placement, rather there is a large percentage that is not placed at all and are often times termed as non playable candidates in industry. From my brief experience as educator in the field of design, I believe this is due to disconnect between education and industrial requirements. In terms of its worth, UGC has put Design at par with Engineering, Architecture, and Technology. Nonetheless, very few universities offer it at the Bachelors and Masters level. It continues to be taught in diploma institutes as a standalone course without the recognition due to it. In fact most people even today believe that interior design means interior decoration. Moreover the design students rarely study science and technology.

Design is badly misunderstood as to ‘make things look pretty’ however it is much more than that. The modern day designers are putting in all the effort needed to make things function well so that it can meet the needs of the end user.

However the problem seems to be with the design education as there is no formal and universal structure for the same.

If education in design has to have a future we need to constantly remind ourselves of its past. In 1919 Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus Movement. It's founding principle, "Art and Technology – a new unity" where he combined crafts and arts. It was a revolutionary concept then and continues to be so now because it combined a wide variety of arts – architecture, sculpture, and painting – with crafts and engineering with the general objective to combine beauty with usefulness.

Since Gropius, design education has gone through various revolutionary changes and plays an important role in spreading design awareness among common people. It is now being understood that design is not just about making things or to make space look good and aesthetically appealing but it is actually a serious business where the form follows the function to cater to the industrial requirements and the function should be for the common good of the society.

It is quite often seen now a days that the educators lack statistical and behavior understanding and exposure. They see what they want to see rather than what actually is. They are not trained to understand the psychological and sociological human behavior.

III. TIME TO CHAGE EDUCATION FOR DESIGN

Initially it was the industrial designer focusing on the form, function and its manufacturing processes however with the changing times the situation is getting complex and challenging. The market requires skilled professionals who are young and updated with the modern technology. It is the need of the hour for the creative industry to have empathetic designers understanding the social responsibilities rather only applied artists.

It is time that the design curriculum incorporates micro sensors along with communication modules, social science, mathematical implementations and technical enhancements like the rapid prototyping.

However, even after the effort being put in creating awareness about design, it still remains an under defined proposition. During the last five decades of design education in India, it is only being taught as per the knowledge of the tutor and the vision of individual design school, rather than developing a curriculum that would cater to the ever changing industry and growing technological and social needs of our nation. There is a serious need to rethink the process of design education from it being functional, to an approach to design of larger techno-social systems. Moving away from the user (consumer) to a more balanced model where different institutions and industries interact on issues of sustainability, co-dependence, and symbiosis.

1. Ability to work as a team player.
2. Ability to verbally communicate with people inside and outside any organization.
3. Ability to decide and solve problems.
4. Ability to be able to obtain information and process the same.
5. Ability to plan and organize work
6. Ability to prioritize.
7. Ability to be able to analyze quantitative data
8. Should possess technical knowledge needed for the job
9. Command over computer software and various programmes meeting up with the market requirement.

10. Ability to not only create written report but also be able to edit the same.
11. Ability to sell or influence others

It is important to understand that good designers do not rush into solutions. They need to understand the importance of research. They need to consult specialists time and again. The universities play a very important role in here as they need to understand and incorporate technologies the world is moving towards into their curriculum. They need to create socially sensitive individuals. They should be able to step back and see the bigger picture. It's time the design education takes STEM based idea of integrated education i.e. science, technology, engineering and mathematics with an interdisciplinary and application based approach.

Design education needs to have science incorporated in the design curriculum as a procedure or the approach methodology. This is because design is a strategic process that requires contextual diversity. In a matter of speaking design can be referred to science but science of philosophy.

IV. CONCLUSION

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence," Rabindranath Tagore. The intrinsic value of design is in its capacity to give joy and at the same time solve problems therefore, design education ought to be training aspirants into the practicality of solving problems while going through the creative professional path.

Design education should provide gainful employment but it is neither about giving a student a means to a job nor about making something pretty but to make something useful and at the same time also enjoying making it "pretty", if I may say so! Remember the beautifully decorated old ceramic covered metal pots, pans and plates of yester years? Priceless! If design education has to reach its prime in the institutions, industry and society in India then it needs to be wrested from the clutches of job mentality and given into the hands of those longing to create with a compulsion to add joy, love and peace to whatever they touch in service of others. In the words of Leo Tolstoy, "Joy can only be real if people look upon their life as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness."

It is time to change...

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