

*Title:*

**The Changing Perspective of Art Education in Pakistan**

*Short Title:*

**Art Education in Pakistan**

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*Date of Final Version:* **January, 2014**

## The Changing Perspective of Art Education in Pakistan \*

### Abstract

The development of art education in Pakistan over the last five decades is explored through three major phases: **Arts as traditional crafts** together with proficiency in painting and calligraphy. Such skills; somewhat existed in academies but, were then transferred through apprenticeship system. **Arts in the academies**; the first turning point, that focused on the ability of drawing in the school level while fine arts and design in the college and university levels. Art was then taught on Western modules while sidelining traditional arts and crafts. **Art as industry** along with professional training in traditional crafts within the frame of discipline-based art education. This contemporary yet important phase of art education was observed only when ideas of art and design reappeared with a new twist and titles. The changing perspective of art education can be interpreted more clearly by examining the curricula; particularly in higher education, and its function in society as well as in the market-place.

**Keywords:** art education, art curricula in Pakistan, curriculum evaluation, art programme

### Emergence of Art Education in Pakistan

Although the artistic tradition of Pakistan is deeply rooted in this land for thousands of years where a multitude of cultures; significantly the Harappan Culture, Aryans, the Buddhists and Greeks, had provided a nourishing cradle to arts and architecture, but contemporary art in the country has remarkable derivations from the miniature painting tradition of the Mughal period. The two considerable creative skills were calligraphy and painting which were inherited to the new generations in their family circles. In the early days of Pakistan, due to lack of proper patronage, the artists, painters and calligraphers turned to adopt commercial art and design; particularly painting signboards or theaters' backdrops and scribe-calligraphy for newspapers, while others made teaching and administration as their earning profession (Ahmed 1970:3). However, the origin of art education in Pakistan; though predominantly was informal in approach, can be traced back in the Colonial Period of the late 19th century. After winning its independence from the British in 1947, the country inherited only two art institutions both were set in Lahore. These were the Mayo School of Arts and Crafts (National College of Arts; NCA, since 1958) and the Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab. In 1948, immediately after the independence, another pioneering art institute was developed by Zainul Abedin; a renowned painter-teacher of the New Bengal School of Art. This institution had proven to be a fully-fledged College of Arts and Crafts in East Pakistan which was affiliated to the Dhaka University (Ahmed 1970). These were the serious efforts of such

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\* An early version of this paper was presented in the *International Conference on the Role of Academic Staff Association in the Promotion of Higher Education*, held in Bara Gali Summer Campus, Peshawar University, organized by PUTA (6-8 June, 2013).

institutions that made art as part of the academic programme. Besides professional craftsmen, young students took a keen interest in the visual arts; many of whom became founder members of art institutions later on in their professional life. With an increasing interest in fine arts, exhibitions and art shows were often held in major cities throughout the country where works of indigenous and foreign artists and calligraphers were displayed. These fluent interactions brought the artistic communities (both visual and performing arts as well as of writers) close to each other and small groups and societies of artists were formed very shortly after the establishment of Pakistan.

The Karachi Fine Arts Society; established in 1951 followed by the Dhaka Art Group. The society organized regular solo and group exhibitions, and also took initiatives in providing art training on professional way. The multiplicity of art programmes in institutions, instructions in art studios run by individual and groups, and a supportive hand of societies, the multipurpose art councils were emerged; primarily from these art societies. These took the responsibility to support painters, calligraphers, actors, singers and writers by arranging related events, and also provided evening classes in painting, music and calligraphy for beginners and amateur artists. The Lahore Art Council was the first among these which was formed in 1953 and was shadowed by one in Dhaka and another in Karachi in 1954 and 1955 respectively. Until 1960s, almost all the provinces had their own Art Councils which had been providing support and instructions to the artists. However, the most prolific exertions were those of the academies in higher education levels that made art an established profession rather than luxury or pastime activity. In these academies, students were then prepared with proper skills in arts and crafts with requisite knowledge and attitude that served a positive role in the economic growth. At the end of 1950s and beginning of 1960s; a period which is considered a transitional period in the education of Pakistan, the trends of qualification in visual arts were established with the award of degrees, diploma and certificate in specialized subjects in universities. Qualification of such awards were parallel to the general system of formal education in Pakistan; ranging from degrees in the undergraduate to post-graduate and higher education levels, and diplomas and certificates of vocational and technical trainings. Whereas the inclusion of art and drawing in school and college levels were introductory and preparative for higher education and professional training.

### **Qualification of Art in the Educational System of Pakistan**

The structure of formal education in Pakistan comprises of three basic stages: school, college and the university. At school level education is organized into primary (grade I-V), middle (grade

VI-VIII) and secondary (grade IX-X) stages whereas the higher secondary (grade XI-XII) level takes place in colleges. The structure is organized in a model of 5+3+2+2 years of education; often labeled collectively as elementary. Grades nine through twelve examinations are conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) and grants certificates in Secondary School Certificate (SSC); also called matriculation, after completing ten years of education, and Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC); or the intermediate stage. At the secondary level, schooling is divided into Science and Arts groups whereas at the Intermediate stage students study within the streams of Science, Arts & Humanities, Commerce and Technical (NRIC 2006).

The post-secondary education varies in duration. Examinations in this stage are conducted and degrees are awarded by universities (both public and private) and the Degree Awarding Institutes (DIAs). A typical degree is awarded after two years of education at bachelor; also the Under-graduate, level in Arts, Science, Commerce or Business, and is labeled as Bachelor Pass (BA/BSc./B.com/BBA). However, in professional and technical fields the duration of education reached three to five years at Bachelor level. A polytechnic diploma and Bachelor degree in Law (LLB) is of three years; Engineering, Veterinary medicine (DVM) and Dental (BDS) requires four years; and a bachelor degree in Medicine (MBBS) and Pharmacy (B. Pharm) is completed in five years (Shah 2003). Further degree in Master; or the Graduate, level (Master Pass; MA/MSc.) requires two years of education after Bachelor Pass; and are also offered by Post-graduate Colleges under the affiliation with universities and DIAs. Master degree (16 years of education) leads to an M. Phil and PhD degrees (2/3 and 3/4 years respectively) which are undertaken by universities and research centers. With the revision of Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, the structure of baccalaureate and graduate degrees are rationalized with BS and MS Honours. At Bachelor level, it is of four years with equivalency to Master Pass, and MS of two to three years; equivalent to M. Phil degree, after Master Pass.

Formal education in Art, Design and Architecture follows the same structure in Intermediate and Higher Education levels. At the intermediate stage, Diploma in Fine Arts (DFA) is awarded by Technical Boards, whereas the post-intermediate degrees (Under-grade to PhD) are awarded by specialized departments and institutes through universities and DIAs. Some Degree and PG colleges; particularly Girls/Home Economics colleges and women universities, offer BA Pass and MA Pass degrees in Fine Arts and Design. Typical degrees at Bachelor Honours (four years excluding Architecture which is of five years) level offered in Visual Arts are Bachelor of

Architecture (B. Arch.); Bachelor of Art & Design (BA&D); Bachelor of Design (B. Des); Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA); Bachelor of Science in Media and Communication (BSMC); Bachelor of Textile and Fashion Design (BFTD); Bachelor of Textile Design (BTD); and Bachelor of Textile Engineering (BTE). At post-graduate level degrees are Master of Design (M. Des); Master of Fine Arts (MFA); MA Art, Design and Architectural Studies (MAADAS); Master of Textile & Fashion Design (MFDT); and MA Art Education are offered. Research degrees (MS/M. Phil and PhD) in Art History and Visual and Cultural Studies are also existed in some institutions.

### **The Changing Perspectives of Art Education**

Over the past fifty years, art education in Pakistan has entailed many changes and developments demonstrating three clearly identifiable evolutionary phases. Although the prevalence of these phases is somewhat overlapping that makes it hard to bracket these into conclusive periods but for convenience and comprehension the tenancy of each phase is enclosed within decades. Moreover, such developments were, though mirrored but, not all at once in the country. Despite some obvious influences of the 1950s, the year 1960 is used as a turning point because prior to that date art education was more or less informal in the professional level (Peshkin 1964:12). The three phases are: '**Art as Traditional Craft**' that covers a period prior to 1960; the '**Art in the Academies**' that represent the educational developments within the following decades from 1960s through 1990s; and the '**Art as Industry**' that ranges from 2000 onward. The changing face of Art Education in Pakistan – since the ever-increasing emergence of art institutions and their mushrooming growth of academic programmes – can be discerned more clearly by examining the curricula implemented during the tenure of three phases.

#### **1. Art as Traditional Craft**

Since its very emergence as a new state, art education in Pakistan was predominated by lucrative subjects (applied arts) and local crafts while related theoretical subjects were either absent or occasional in the coursework. More precisely the nature of study was practical and the purpose of such training was likely to prepare skilled persons in applied arts rather aesthetics. Architecture, textile design and printing, and a diverse range of traditional crafts and manufacture were the focal elements in the artistic landscape of Pakistan (Tarar 2008:335). The Mayo School of Art; which was established as an industrial art and design institute by the British Administration in 1872, has always been under the influence of traditional heritage and market-

oriented production (Muborakshoeva 2013:101). By its very nature and concept, the school was mentioned with different names in the official documents; such as, “Mayo Memorial School of Industrial Design, Industrial School of Art & Design, Lahore School, School of Arts (Tarar 2008:204), and finally National College of Arts; suggested by its last British Principal, Sidney Spedding in 1954 which was [formally] adopted in 1958” (Tarar 2006:335).

The Architectural studies at NCA were confined merely to drafting and had not gone beyond the diploma level in NCA and other institutions – like Govt. School of Architecture (GSA) and Architecture Department at UET where Diploma initiated in 1954 at GSA and degree in 1962 at UET – during the whole decade of 1950s (Naz p.8). Whereas the formal education in Textile Design (Under-graduate level) was instigated for the first time in Faisalabad at the very end (October 12th) of 1959 (Hussain 2008:43). On the other hand, training in Fine Arts (Painting) was started at the Punjab University by Ana Molka (Painting being part of BA syllabus in 1942 and MA Painting in 1955) but a few successful students; majority of whom were girls, reached to win a degree (Hassan 1991:48-49). Celebrated artists in this period were either foreign educated (such as Ana Molka, Shakir Ali) or self-taught (like Ustad Allah Bukhsh and Sadeqain).

In addition, all attempts to detour traditional way of transferring art and systemizing Western module of teaching, were somewhat futile. Muborakshoeva (2013:103) quotes a scholar of the NCA that *“although the colonial teachers preserved the local arts and crafts from extinction, they nevertheless did not appreciate the native informal method of art teaching that took place in the craftsmen’s workshop.”* However, realizing the fact that traditional crafts hold a vital place in the artistic wealth, Mark Sponenburgh in the late fifties, although gave precedence to modern Western line of education but, took initiatives to integrate industry and visual arts in a harmonious way. In response to this, students were motivated to preserve endangered folk arts, and eventually a study tour was arranged to Northwestern regions, and Folk Arts of Swat were documented and collected which were exhibited at NCA Gallery and next in Karachi. Efforts were continued by collecting Folk Arts of Sindh in the following years (Tarar 2008:338-39).

An important aspect of art education was the traditional disciplines of miniature painting and calligraphy. Training in miniature was brought to the school in 1951 when Haji Muhammad Sharif; a hereditary court painter, joined the College as head of the respective department. Whereas skills in the calligraphy were totally transferred in family circles or out of the academies. The authorities of Mayo School entirely overlooked to adopt this art even for

commercial purpose; such as book printing. Students during this time also hesitate to join miniature as their subject of specialization because of difficulty in seeking employment in the field, and a few successful among the twenty students of the Sharif's studio could get jobs as Drawing Master at schools or became Commercial artists in the market (Tarar 2011a:585ff).

Moreover, signboards writing and painting theaters' backdrops were the sole responsibility of those painters who were seldom considered as artists. Such painters were trained through apprenticeship system in the market-place rather than institutions. Among the key examples is Ustad Allah Bakhsh who by profession was a letter-painter and; though respected in the artistic community but, was called 'old fashioned' among the new generation of artists who were skilled in the art schools. The NCA was credited being the center of aesthetic concerns in the public and authorities as well, art-school-educated artists and designers were given preference, and those who were eager in learning art and design and could afford it rushed to the academies. In that, art institutions increased in number throughout the country.

## **2. *Art in the Academies***

It was somewhat two decades that Lahore, Karachi and Dhaka have been the prime centers of artistic education in the Pakistan. However, the beginning of 1960s observed remarkable manifestations in art education both in school and university levels with new education policy. More art institutions were devised throughout the country. Field Marshall, General Muhammad Ayub Khan, then the President of Pakistan, appointed a commission with a task to analyze the whole existing system of education and develop a uniform educational system for all levels and disciplines under the umbrella of a national curriculum (Peshkin 1964:16; Tarar 2008:335). Serious initiatives were taken at higher education level during this time. New art departments were opened in other universities included the Department of Architecture (established in 1962) at University of Engineering & Technology, Lahore (Naz p. 8), Department of Fine Arts, Peshawar University and the Karachi School of Art & Architecture (set in 1962 and 1964 respectively).

Among the already existed art institutes, the NCA received a special attention in its restructuring. Many American and European experts and teachers were hired for short tenure who contributed to various departments and sections; such as design, ceramics, painting, fine arts and sculpture as well as the fundamental courses, of the College. The College was then organized into three departments; the Fine Art, Design, and Architecture, that offered National

Diploma in Fine Arts and also Under-graduate degree in specialized subjects.

The Architecture Department, UET has the credit to award the first Bachelor degree in Architecture in 1962. The Department of Fine Arts (Art & Design since 2005), Peshawar University, initially offered diploma in one of the three subjects; the Fine Arts, Textile Design, and Advertising & Publicity Design, in 1962. After having pass out the first batch of diploma, the Under-graduate course was prepared for the students which was instigated in 1964. At the same year, the Department of Fine Arts, Punjab University started Graphic Art degree at Graduate level.

The Karachi School of Art appeared as the first Art Institute in Karachi. The specialty of this school was to bring a new discipline (of Media studies), along with General Design and Textile Design were integrated in its curriculum; both at diploma and Bachelor levels. The Textile Institute, Faisalabad which was conceived in 1954 and was formally inaugurated in 1959, and in 1965, it became National College of Textile Engineering; a premier textile institute that was granted affiliation by UET, Lahore. This College offered diploma in its early days and Under-graduate degree in the second phase.

During the following decade; 1970s, two other departments were established. The Department of Fine Arts (now Institute of Art & Design) at University of Sindh, Jamshoro and the Department of Fine Arts at Baluchistan University, Quetta; established in 1970 and 1971 respectively. Typical courses were Bachelor and Master in Fine Arts and Textile Design. Provision and revisions in curricula were made during the next decade while the structure of existing departments were somewhat strengthened. In 1984, MFA classes (in Painting, Textile and Design) were commenced in the Department of Fine Arts, Peshawar University. In the coming year, 1985, the NCA was given an autonomous status of DIA; degree awarding institute. By the mid-80s, private institutions were allowed to operate. The Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture (IVSAA), was conceived by a visionary group of artists and architects in 1989. The School brought Architecture along with Interior Design, Communication Design and Fine Arts in its courses of studies.

During the last decade of this phase, another visionary institute with a humble support of Export Promotion Bureau, Govt. of Pakistan, and the collaboration of international assistance; especially French and Swedish, the Pakistan School of Fashion & Design (now institute; PIFD since 2008) was formed in 1994. The School initiated fashion and handicrafts in the syllabus of art education. This Institute was second, at the same year, in its concept and nature by the

establishment of Pakistan Textile Institute of Fashion & Design, Lahore where subjects of Textile Technology, Management, Merchandizing and Marketing were added in its Bachelor syllabus (BTE/B. Sc. /BBA). In 1999, the Department of Visual Studies was opened at Karachi University with degree programmes in Architecture and Fine Arts (B. Arch, BFA). Such initiatives of bringing crafts into academies became the hallmark of reconsideration art education in the country which were further refurbished after the creation of Higher Education Commission in 2002.

### **3. Art as Industry**

The Higher Education Commission (HEC); erstwhile University Grant Commission (UGC), in its draft of revised curriculum for Fine Arts (BFA) realized two important aspects of art education in Pakistan: art has been taught on Western way of teaching and that traditional arts and crafts have been sidelined. The new syllabus prepared in the first meeting of National Curriculum Revision Committee (NCRC) included courses for BA Pass, MA Pass in Fine Arts and 4-years integrated programme in Fine Arts. In the foundation year Drafting and 3D Studies were added as compulsory whereas Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Miniature, and Printmaking along with Art History and dissertation with original research on a relevant topic were the fundamental subjects in the discipline of Fine Arts (BFA Honours).

Mention must be made that although the syllabus of BFA Honours did not include separate courses in the disciplines of traditional crafts; such as pottery, ceramics, woodwork or metalwork etc. but the committee recommended that every representative must provide list of crafts people, and the Lok Virsa, Islamabad should also be requested to provide resource material and information of national heritage to respective departments. Further, two important recommendations of the members were that art education should be improved on Secondary and Higher Secondary levels; and suggested curriculum of Govt. of Singapore at the same level. Secondly, it was recommended that the degree in Fine Arts should be considered as professional rather academic; especially while recruiting staff, for more efficiency in the field (HEC 2003:28).

The problems and deficiencies of the previous curricula were overcome in the Revised Curriculum of Fine Arts (4-years BFA Honours) in its final meeting of NCRC held in 2010 (HEC 2010). The curriculum was developed on a standardized layout and course outline of more than one hundred areas of studies; both discipline specific and supportive, were listed. Besides this, guidelines were devised for more than a dozen subjects of specialization in the discipline of Fine

Arts. These include Drawing, Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture, Miniature Painting, Photography, Film & Video, Ceramics, Crafts, Glass, Islamic Calligraphy and Islamic Art. To add more, pedagogical practice, critical inquiries, and societal as well as philosophical measures were highlighted in the draft. The Mission statement and objectives of this well-elaborated syllabus further expose the fact that art education is more than merely a skill in creative practice and art and design production, and triumvirate of art (the artists, critics and historians) are responsible citizens of the community. Beyond having been seasoned in respective field of art and design, they should perform as educators, researchers, administrator and policy-makers; especially in the field of Art & Design (HEC 2010: 9-10).

Curriculum for Textile Design was standardized in 2008 that focused on the technical aspects of textile design and production; particularly on Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAD & CAM). Yet the last impression of art curriculum for Fashion and Design was developed by NCRC in 2011. Detailed Curricula for six disciplines; namely Fashion Design, Fashion Marketing & Merchandize, Textile Design, Jewelry Design & Gemological Sciences, Furniture Design & Manufacture, and Leather Accessories & Footwear, were prepared (HEC 2011). The present curricula are more advanced, and discipline-specific theoretical, philosophical and critical subjects were added for the first time in the syllabus.

In 2004, the NCRC revised the curriculum of Architecture with regard to the social, economic and political environment of national and international level. The Revision Committee finalized the draft of 5-years degree programme in Architecture. Regional considerations regarding Architectural education were acknowledged in the syllabus (Naz p.11). It was followed in 2008 wherein emphasis was given on the diverse nature of the discipline that architecture has always been multi-disciplinary wherein environmental, social, cultural and ethical issues as well as technological innovations were assimilated in the course contents while preparing the draft of syllabus (HEC 2004:10-16).

The curricula (of Fine Art, Design and Architecture) mentioned above provide a uniform Scheme of Studies for the Under-graduate level which were implemented in the existing as well as newly established institutions during the first decade of the current millennium. To name some of the newly formed departments and colleges are Department of Fashion and Design, Sarhad University (2001); School of Textile Engineering, Faisalabad University (2002); Department of Art & Design, AJ&K University, and Multan College of Arts, Bahauddin Zakariya University (both in

2003); Textile Institute of Pakistan, Karachi (2004); The Schools of Visual Arts/ Architecture/ Liberal Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Islamabad, and Department of Fine Arts, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta (both in 2005); Departments of Art & Design and Architecture, Hazara University, Mansehra (2008); School of Creative Arts, The University of Lahore and so many others in the line.

Advanced degrees (Graduate through PhD) are structured by universities and DIAs with formal accreditation from HEC. To exemplify this, PG degrees in Textile and Fashion Design (MFTD) at Sarhad University; MFA Interior and Graphic Design in Foundation University; M. Des and MS in Art & Design are in the Hazara University; MA Multimedia Arts in the NCA; MA Art, Design, & Architectural Studies (MAADAS) and MA Art Education are parts of academic programmes in the Beaconhouse National University. Research degrees (M. Phil and PhD) in Art History are offered in Punjab University, Cultural Studies & Visual Arts in NCA, and Architecture in the School of Architecture and Design (SOAAD since 2002), UET, Lahore.

To overview the last phase, we come across to know the fact that art education now evolved in a new direction. During the term of this phase old and traditional subjects more specific to art and design, and that were still existed in some way or other in the market or small industries, reappeared with a new twist and titles. The traditional crafts once were neglected in the academic circles again entered into the scene with more vigilant approaches. Pottery, Ceramics, and Islamic Art; a few to be mentioned from the list, are typical cultural and traditional crafts that got attention of the academic authorities. Training in crafts was commenced in the academies on modern technological lines with a submissive support of artisans and crafts people. Similarly, the Fashion, Manufacture, Advertising and Printing are the prime forces that focused on the institution-industry relation within the frame of discipline-based art education; an approach based on humanistic education that include both the process and the content of inquiry (Stankiewicz 2000:308-9).

### **The Influencing Factors and Evolvement of New Trends**

To analyze brief history and the contemporary status of art education in Pakistan, it is obvious that trends in the field are primarily lying in the structure of transferring skills and knowledge. Since its inception, art courses and their pedagogical approaches were Western import in the country; and more or less still has its presence in academies, but eventually a number of cultural

and national challenges altered the utility and function of art education in Pakistan. Some of the major factors in the changing perspective include:

### **1. *National Identity***

Essentially Pakistan is an ideological country and besides its general character as a nation, higher education on the whole and art education in specific has been changed both after independence and since 1960s and then in the 70s. The Education Policy 1959 had the main objective to evolve a National System of Education so that could safeguard the spiritual, moral and cultural values whereas the Education Policy of 1970 focused on the preservation of Islamic values in the higher education level (Isani 2001:44, 56). A rich heritage in Islamic art, architecture and traditional crafts have been the fields of interest in the academic curricula.

### **2. *Technological Changes***

The curriculum of art education has widely reshaped by the global changes in technological advancement; particularly of computer. This influence is more obvious in the production of art and design. Textile productions and printing as well as electronic media has dramatically changed the structure of Production Art. The nature of subjects and innovation in studios on scientific lines also brought changes in the art curricula and pedagogical techniques; which were assimilated in the syllabus time to time in the pace of provisions and revisions.

### **3. *Economic Factors and Market Demands***

An influential factor in the trends of art education is the economic concerns. Consumers' behaviour and demands of goods or services set strategies in advertising and publicity. Ultimately the manufacturers are increasingly moving towards professional approaches in marketing and merchandizing that in return put pressure on designers and marketing consultants to compete them in a narrow and tough market-place. High qualified and experienced designers and salesmen are in the demand of manufacturers and retailers. In the pace of such efforts, the curriculum of art and design are being refurbished that could meet the demands of clients and consumers in the competitive market.

Moreover, students prefer lucrative and market-oriented disciplines; such as Communication Design, Architecture, Interior Design, Textile Design and Multimedia Arts, rather than of Fine

Arts and especially Painting and Sculpture. In addition, private universities that add force to the corpus of higher and professional education have initiated subjects of applied arts in their campuses. The graduate of art institutions are seeking employment or business in the market-place and seldom think of Fine or Performing Arts as compared to Commercial Arts.

#### **4. Industrial Requirements and Trade Policy**

The contemporary art education is largely influenced by the professional and technical necessities of industry and regional as well as international trade. Fashion Industry is motivational in the development and change in art education at large. Fashion accessories and articles now are within the priority list of exports. Equally the demand of traditional handicrafts is increasing in international market. The products are thus mass produced and are used to compete the international market. In this, industries are seeking professionals and skilled persons to organize and produce well-advanced trade in the country.

In summary, art education has always been in the service of national identity, cultural values, and prosperity of the country. It has been a professional education in the global scenario and a distinct discipline in the academies around the world. In Pakistan it still passes under stress and dispute in the educational setup. The need of this is felt in the recommendations made by the committee of Curriculum Revision for BFA programme prepared by NCRC in 2010. According to these the Art & Design departments in universities should be given the status of institutes; an Association of Art & Design should be established to provide a platform for art institutions and faculty; and that the HEC should establish an accreditation body to ensure standards in Art & Design Education both in public and private institutions (HEC 2010:9).

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