

Art education in our country now is in a “turning point “and its important needs to be refined and propagated and for that there need to be a coherent national policy with an inclusive space to incorporate / alter depending up on the specific needs of the field and the stakeholders.

I take this opportunity to share some of my experience and thoughts here.

I am not in with the question of whether PhD should be there or not. There can be research and PhDs in Visual Art practice. But the question of making it compulsory for the appointment and promotions of Teachers who are going to teach studio courses (Painting, sculpture Applied arts etc.) in the university level, and also considering the “PhD holder without Practice” over a practicing artists with experience and brilliance. Few points I want to put forward here are, one, the insistence of making PhD compulsory is not compatible with the current art –educational- syllabuses or courses offered by the universities across India. The terminal degree offered by all the universities in India in the above practice based subjects are MVA or MFA with a specialization in Painting or sculpture or Applied arts. So what is the logic of PhD being compulsory eligibility criteria for teaching a studio based course?

There is Departments of Art history & aesthetics in few Universities which are completely theory based Course, offers PhD program, which are not in question here.

Ironically, we have Teachers with PhD in many Departments across the art institutions of India who are teaching practice based courses. In many cases the story of these PhDs are questionable in terms of it’s “research and the outcomes “

Now, we also have few Departments in Universities in India give a ‘Fine Arts’ degree. This is a three years course with Fine Arts (Drawing &Painting) as one of the subjects along with other subjects of Humanity studies. Most of the students here after three years opt for masters and subsequently do PhD. Now These PhD in Fine Arts are seen equivalent to the professional course (2+4+2) and I myself has witnessed candidates with such PhD applying to teach 4+2 Fine Arts courses in the universities and they have given priority over an applicant who has a master’s degree (4+2) and experience in Fine Arts.

There were teachers who were appointed before the criteria of PhD are forced go to such universities and got PhD s to retain the job and for further promotions.

The situation here again ironical, the policy of Education Department making PhD mandatory is to promote research in the concerned fields and generate knowledge which “will take the field in to new heights.” This has been done without any consideration of existing Art Education System and the policies. The Universities and Colleges in this country are governed (including administrations and appointment) by different bodies and agencies depending on which state it belongs.

If we are talking about quality of art education and research we need to clarify these disparities and develop a new approach towards education and knowledge generation.

The above points, in my opinion create confusions and also give way to manipulate the system and halt the development and research in the art education in our country.

In this above context, I would like to share some developments on this issue. I was part of a group of art teachers from Baroda, Delhi and Jaipur along with prof. Jogen chaudhary who had a couple of meetings with the Education minister and subsequently the UGC and the Higher Education Secretary to apprise on the confusions regarding the criteria for appointment of teachers and their promotions. This meeting went well as we had Prof. Jogen chaudhary, an eminent artist and current Rajyasabha member with us and we got a good hearing. In our proposal we have asked them to appoint an expert committee of eminent artist and art educators to recommend and correct anomaly and disparities in the criteria’s of appointments and promotions of teachers and in the syllabus of universities in the area of visual and performing arts. The last meeting we had was positive as they have understood the issues and asked us to make the recommendations rather than appointing another committee. So we have tried to contact as many as teachers across the country and get a feedback and based on that decided to make recommendations mainly on the

API (Academic Performance Index ,which is a number based evaluation system used for the promotions of Teachers) appointments and recommending a Practice based PhD programme. And we are working on this and still we need to compile the entire recommendations. At this point of time we also felt there is a lack of communication on art education and it issues among the teachers across India and we decided to make call to form a all India association of Art teachers which can become a body to address various issues related to art education in our country. I hope we can get together and work for the betterment.

few thoughts on PhD.

- Why people do research?
- I think it is because of the promise of new insights and the possibility of more exciting theories which holds a prospect to improve the systems and structures which we put in place to conduct our lives.
- We construct theories to rationalize the practice in place to plan and implement the experiences and knowledge gained through the practice.
- In practice, the outcomes are more surprising and it can challenge the existing conceptions and theories, and can take a field in new directions.

References:

“A central feature of art practice is that it embodies ideas that are given form in the process of making artworks. Irrespective of the informing sources, media preferences, or image-base, the artist exercises individual control over the creation and presentation of artifacts as forms of knowledge. Further, the images and ideas created have the capacity to not only change the artist’s conceptions of reality, but also influence the viewer’s interpretation of artworks. Consequently art practice can be seen as a form of intellectual and imaginative inquiry, and as a place where research can be carried out that is robust enough to yield reliable insights that are well grounded and culturally relevant. This paper argues that artifacts created as a result of visual arts research have the capacity to be interpreted as evidence in a range of robust ways.”

Sullivan, G. (2010-2005).

“We are interested in the way in which practice advances knowledge. There has been a lot of discussion about this topic in the UK and internationally, in part caused by the growth of art and design in the university sector and the expectation of, and evaluation in terms of, research outputs. Many other disciplines are led by advances in practice; indeed it has been argued that all research is practiced-based. However, there seems to be group of disciplines in which the practitioner holds a particular role and in which the theorist may be viewed as some sort of onlooker or critic. Those disciplines are as diverse as art, therapies and law. The fact that these disciplines are advanced by practice does not mean that they are not advanced by theory. There are theories of art, theories of therapy and theories o law. But the practitioner is somehow the key professional, the key persons who advances the discipline .So what is the relationship between these roles, and what do these disciplines have in common that might form a theory of research? This is research in to practice. Of course, in such disciplines it is no surprise to find that it also means to put that research in to practice, i.e.to evaluate its outcomes in terms of its application to practice.”

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