

Challenges Faced by Students in Pursuing Arts-Based Education in Pakistan

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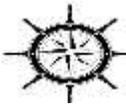
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Abstract

Art education has been continuously resisted, especially in Pakistan. Firstly, a segment of parents feel that the profession of art will not give a decent income to their child; they prefer engineering, medicine, business studies, and in the present times, computers and IT. Also, the religious segment condemns figurative and performing art. Our education policy also didn't give much importance to art; the subject of drawing is considered of less value, with art teachers not properly trained (Vandal, 2004). This paper is an attempt to create awareness of art and to inform parents and the general masses of its importance. The Methodology of the paper was done by consulting books written about or by senior artists, designers, architects and teachers of the arts. Also, published papers have been consulted to look at local/ inland as well as the global and international perspectives from online journals on the teaching of the arts. The qualitative method of study has been adapted, and thirty-four art design students were interviewed from the following institutions: 1. Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, 2. School of Visual and Performing Arts (SOVAPA), Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, 3. Karachi School of Art, and 4. ZVMG Rangoonwala Community Centre. The students expressed two concerns that they faced; 1. Some said that their parents were uncomfortable; reasons are mentioned in detail in the paper, 2. Financial constraints, as art education requires a continuous requirement of expenses incurred during the course duration. Still, the present situation is positive and encouraging as art education has a wide canvas and there are plenty of opportunities of art and design graduates in today's day and age. Also, it is mentioned in this paper that there are quite a few institutions and NGOs' that support students financially and in other matters also, which makes their initial journey comfortable.

Keywords: *Arts-Based Education, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Economic Constraints in Education, Creative Education in Pakistan*



Introduction

Pakistan has a long legacy of art from the pre-British era, the Indus Valley Civilization, the Gandhara, Harappa, Aryans, Buddhists, Greeks, and the Mughal art, miniature, and architecture, to mention a few. After independence, Pakistan inherited a small number of art schools, mainly the Mayo School of Arts (National College of Arts) and the Department of Fine Arts, University of Punjab, Lahore (Khan, January 2014); (Husain M., 2007), (Mirza, 1997).

At present, quite a number universities and institutions in the country have arts, design, and architecture departments; however, there has been continuous resistance to art education. One is religious beliefs; some people oppose performing arts, portraiture, sculpture, and figurative art (Mr. (Late) Zia Mohyeddin, NAPA), (Husain, Rabia Zuberi Life and Work, 2008). A segment of parents feel that art and design would not give a decent living to their ward, and they prefer traditional subjects like engineering, medicine, business studies, computers, and finance.

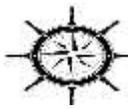
Regarding art education, drawing and art have not been given importance in our school system. The education policy has been silent regarding art education in schools. However, the Higher Education Commission recommended improvement of art education at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels; the curriculum followed by Singapore was suggested to be looked at (Khan, January 2014). Moreover, there are still no proper teachers in schools to teach art right from the beginning. Art graduates or individuals who have taken a few courses in drawing and painting are appointed as art teachers, but they do not have the proper training to teach (Vandal, 2004).

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance and benefits of art education and to support and encourage children who wish to study arts and want to make it their profession, for which the situation is positive as many universities and educational institutions are offering art and design courses right up to the highest levels, with scholarships and financial support. Also, NGOs' and various private organizations are supporting young artists in exhibiting, displaying, and selling their work. One segment of parents are happy that their daughters are learning arts and crafts, on the one hand to facilitate their early marriage and to support the family, and on the other as seeking teaching jobs in schools with limited, short working hours, and lesser interaction with the male segment of the society. The benefit of art for the less fortunate, special and intellectually challenged children has also been mentioned.

Art education in Pakistan, art-based education, design education, Arts curriculum, difficulties of art students, challenges faced by art students, parents' resistance, intellectually challenged/ special children, benefits of art education, career guidance counselors, students' guidance counselors.

Research Questions

1. What are the difficulties and constraints faced by students pursuing art-based education in Pakistan?
2. What are the benefits of acquiring art-based education?



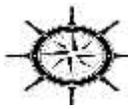
3. What is the importance and significance of Student Counselors/ Career Guidance Counselors?
4. What is being done at present to improve art education in Pakistan?

Literature Review

The beginning of art goes way back to the time when people lived in caves and used to make drawings with the help of ashes and other natural materials. In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, various civilizations came and went and left their mark (Husain, 2008). The Mughal period brought its art, and the teaching and learning of arts and crafts were also encouraged. The British were art appreciators and were impressed and fascinated by the arts and crafts, and used these already established industries to their benefit when they came. In this process, they also influenced the local artisans through their knowledge and expertise. Moreover, they took advantage of the knowledge and information available here, and of every book published by the natives during that period, a few copies were shipped by sea to the UK at the India Office Library and the National British Library, and are preserved there to this day (Abdi, 2013). The British built their empire on the foundations laid by the Majestic Indian rulers who transformed the country before them during the three centuries. Sunday Herald (Eraly, December 1995). Even long before the Mughals, there was plenty of art in India, Amir Timur, or Timur Lung, (1398), practically destroyed India but spared the artisans and craftsmen and took them with him, who then taught their art to the whole of Central Asia and spread Indian art, culture and civilization to foreign lands (Bhatti, 1997).

During the past 75 years, the teaching of art has continuously changed. The legacy of the education established by the British has its roots well embedded in the system, and our system of education has been developed upon the same, with schools, colleges, and universities teaching arts, science, humanities, and various subjects. Moreover, the globalization of the 21st century has brought different cultures and new concepts, especially in the arts, as students continuously learn new things. If we look at the Karachi Biennale 2022, we see technology partnered with the arts, and most of the projects consisted of electronic and media gadgets being used. Thus, bringing all the sciences together in collaboration with the arts is a positive element and a great advantage to an art and design student to grow and expand his/ her knowledge in various new avenues (Desk, Nov 2022), (Tahir, 2017).

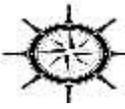
However, there are challenges and difficulties in imparting art education in Pakistan as our education system is already in a not so satisfying state, with different systems of education functioning, the government schools which have the lowest standards, who give free education, or in some cases charge very nominal fee, then the private schools which do give somewhat quality education, but charge a high rate of tuition as well as charges for many other facilities. The most well-off segment of society sends their wards to the schools following the Cambridge system, offering O and A-level certificates. In all this confusion, art education takes a back seat or is not given due importance due to various factors. As mentioned before, firstly, there is the religious element, then the parents resist as they feel that a child simply doing a BFA or getting a



design degree may not earn a decent living. Also, art education is expensive as the student needs consumable stationery regularly. In our schools, art education is mostly called the ‘Drawing period’, and if there is a paucity of time for any other subject, the art period is taken over. Also, there is a dire need for proper art teachers, as at times art and design graduates cannot teach, or are simply not trained as teachers (Vandal, 2004) (Husain M., *Art Views, Encounters with Artists in Pakistan*, 2005). Even the author, whilst attending a ceramics workshop recently, felt that the teacher was unable to deliver properly, as he was an artisan who, due to his vast experience, was asked to conduct a workshop, where he started by simply sitting quietly in front of the participants, making objects with clay. It so happened that some of the elderly ladies amongst the participants, who spoke his language, started asking questions and started probing him, after which he began talking and explaining what he was doing. Both, himself and his assistant, who was there with him to help bring the clay and the heavy potter’s wheel and set it up, started explaining and showing what they were doing, but did have difficulty in communication as they did not seem to have the right words, and were also hesitant in speaking in front of a large audience (Badin, 2025). The author feels that even if they would have taken a few courses at the TRC, Teachers’ Resource Centre, or TDC, Teachers’ Development Centre – Prof. Abbas Husain, it would have done wonders for them. Fresh graduates these days are taken as TAs’/(Teaching Assistants) in art and design offering colleges and universities, where under the patronage of senior artists and teachers, they do get the training on how to teach, which is a positive step (personal narration). Also, an encouraging note, jobs for art teachers have come to be in great demand in Pakistan during the past couple of decades with the awareness and importance of art and design education, and is much attractive and favorable for female artists and fresh art graduates, as in the school environment working hours are less and a teacher in most cases can come home at around lunch time, due to this her parents are comfortable in today’s day and age and prefer that their daughters take arts and crafts (Farhana Altaf Qureshi, 2021).

Benefits of Art Education

In continuation of the above, where artists and designers used electronic and multi-media devices (Desk, Nov 2022), if we see art, it is a diverse and accommodating subject that integrates with almost anything. Art education provides diverse career opportunities. The curriculum of art is interdisciplinary, where students from all departments are together and take more or less the same courses in the beginning, and share a blurred boundary. Madoff says that art schools are erasing boundaries dividing the disciplines as the flexibility and importance of the expression in concept are shared and practiced by all in material means. When it comes to presentation, painting, drawing, sculpture, video, or photography, all may join in constructing an installation. All art comes together and students of different disciplines and departments often work together, learning and taking ideas from each other, Madoff says that the ethics of knowledge in its essential definition of any school’ foundation is considered as a ‘gathering place’, a concept of simply experiencing the pleasure of being together, cooperating, chatting, learning, and crossing the bridges of generations of time. The concept is that whether it has a limpid or rigid structure, it

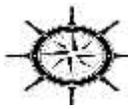


is open to new ideas and opinions and is willing to change, whether from internal experiences and experimentation assistance, or advice from outside. The flexibility and diversity are there, which is beneficial to the art student to mold him/ herself in any situation (Madoff, 2009). The author personally agrees with this, 'gathering place' concept (Madoff, 2009), as he experienced with a group of students visiting a thesis display, where students of one university along with their faculty members, roamed around the thesis display, arranged by another university, thus talking, interacting, and discussing each exhibit for quite some time with the students and faculty of the host university. This kind of get-together and group discussion, where one student expresses his/ her ideas and comments, whilst the others listen, observe, and learn; and then another student also speaks and gives his/ her observations; a kind of a 'cooperative learning' situation, simply outside the four walls of a conventional, theoretical class room is a much more learning experience and phenomenon, with the bombardment of information and diverse ideas coming from every direction. This is much more beneficial than each student going to see the display individually on his own, roaming around alone, and then leaving the premises within an hour or even less. Just like the gatherings hapenning in the past at Bashir Mirza's 'The Gallery', on Kutchery Road, and S. Ali Imam's Indus Gallery, where along with the sale of art work, a lot of intellectual conversation use to take place (Husain M., Art Views, Encounters with Artists in Pakistan, 2005) (Ali, 2000 - 1995) (Husain M., Bashir Mirza The last of the Bohemians, 2006).

Art education does not limit the child to a closed, narrow corridor; it creates many opportunities and avenues. The document '*Obstacles and insecurities cause a demise of theater in Pakistan*' by Sara Pirzada, a thesis submitted by a student as a partial requirement for her Bachelor's degree in Communication Design, was looked at with permission from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture to use as reference. The paper mentions the migration of people from theatre to other media arts (coming from a theatre background). The new media needed people trained and with experience, and these people were quickly accommodated. Then in the 80s, there were limitations imposed on theatre by the government, which was a big blow, but the other media, radio, TV, and film came as a savior to the theatre people. In fact, these people from the theatre were the only ones who made and built up the radio and TV when it came to Pakistan in the initial years of the 60s. This was also mentioned at the Seventh Global Urdu Conference 2014, held at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, in the session on '*Urdu Drama, Traditions and Problems*', on October 19, 2014.

Dewey supports the idea of including art in education. He says that creativity is developed, as well as the concept of tolerance and appreciation of others' points of view and self-expression. Art practice helps the child grow physically, mentally, and socially. It gives them a chance to be creative and the ability to think. Moreover, according to Dewey, art helps the child to understand the world around them and to create a new environment.

Gardner's theory provides the basis for education in the arts. In his theory of multiple intelligences, he says that various intellectual possibilities are possessed by a human being. Gardner mentioned six areas that should be looked at: intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic,



interpersonal, musical, spatial, and intelligence. He said that art gives them multiple forms of expression and develops a wide range of intelligence in children.

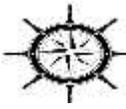
“The father of Art Education,” Lowenfeld used to teach blind students in his early career when he used art and therapy, and found out that children with certain disabilities were also capable. He found out that art can help rehabilitate, remediate, and develop the ability to socialize in disabled children. He mentioned in his book, ‘Creative and Mental Growth, 5th Edition (1970)’, that using art helps children to be independent, have social interactions, have general well-being, and have flexible thinking. Kramer mentions that including art in the curriculum builds aesthetic awareness and skills, as it is therapeutic.

Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning (Fiske, 1999) says that the inclusion of art activities in the classroom helped children achieve better grades in other subjects. Another study included theatre arts and music in the students of grades 8th to 12th found that there was much improvement in their studies and also their behavior with their teacher and other students, showing tolerance and empathy in their general behavior.

Teachers College, Columbia University, whilst conducting a study of 2000 grade 4 to 8 students, found that a rich arts program developed in these students’ creativity, cognitive, and personal competence, and had a recognizable success in their academics. Also, Burton says that students in art groups had better performance than those who had low exposure to the arts. The students who were exposed to the art environment were more vocal and were able to express themselves better with imagination, ideas, and proper and positive thought processes; they were also more interested in learning and were more cooperative, confident, and well-behaved.

A partnership between special education teacher preparation programs was examined by Schwartz and Pace (2008) at a school district and Hofstra University, Long Island, New York. The university students had designed an after-school program for students who were weak in literacy and mathematics. This program was for students in 8th grade that needed extra help. The program was designed to help these students while incorporating art in the after-school program as well as at the regular school timings. This showed improvement in the children’s attendance in regular school, their grades got better, and the students had a sense of belonging, and were inclined towards learning skills needed in their regular school learning and assignments. They took the students to the local art museum and talked to them about the exhibits on display. They integrated art instruction and art appreciation into the regular school tutorial and academic program. The students learned to express themselves in a non-verbal manner. They observed that these students who had various disabilities could interact and communicate without relying only upon the spoken or written language, and found that this project was the most successful that they had experienced, and felt the children had learned more with this project than with any other method applied before.

Another report by Jennifer Durham (2010), regarding The Lab School of Washington (LSW), co-founded with Sally L. Smith in 1967, this school has been using an arts-based curriculum for the past 50 years in educating disabled students. The school is internationally recognized, and it



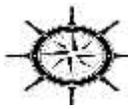
has a diverse age group of students from grades one to twelve. The students are also from different stages of learning difficulties, from moderate to severe disabilities. The school has 600 students. The school found the arts to be a necessity to incorporate in all aspects of the curriculum as it would instigate and excite the students and motivate them to participate. It also promotes self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth. Also, students who had previous bad experiences in school find this setting rather comfortable and find a sense of accomplishment and success in art class participation. During the program, they found that teaching students with disabilities, art is a very valuable tool. They found that students have improved in writing and reading and had a significantly higher Broad Knowledge cluster, compared to other students who were not in the program or had been admitted to this program at a later stage in grade seven.

A program called Arts-2-gether, founded by Very Special Arts (VSA), is for children from ages 12 to 19 with developmental disabilities. This is a one-to-one program with educators who are trained art therapists. This is also an after-school program that allows students to experience learning away from their normal school environment (Wexler, 2011).

Heitin (2014) gives an example of a special education program integrating the arts. They call it Everyday Arts for Special Education (EASE). It has been developed by a non-profit organization in New York City called Urban Arts Partnership. This includes visual artists, theater actors, and musicians, bringing them into the classroom as they are teaching artists. They mentored special children and their teachers. This school district has 23,000 special students with various disabilities such as emotional, autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, intellectual disability (challenged), and so forth. This district received \$4.6 million to incorporate art education into the curriculum through the EASE program. Heitin (2014) (New York City's District 75) Report by Rob Horowitz, associate director of the Center for the Arts Education Research at Teachers College, Columbia University, said that the efforts of EASE have shown significant improvement in elementary students' communication skills and academic, socialization, and have very encouraging results.

Seeing the success of the EASE program in New York, a school district consisting of 640,000 children in Los Angeles also adopted the program as a pilot process for students in the general education setting and also for children with special needs (Heitin, 2014). Heitin found that the feedback of the teachers using EASE was very positive, they found that the students, as well as the teachers, have opportunities for professional development where everyone is learning something new and positive with artists as mentors, the system has helped many students from New York school districts to enhance their capabilities in communication, behavioral attitude and following and taking instructions. The teachers say that the EASE program is flexible and allows teachers to accommodate students of different abilities.

The enormous benefits to education, in general and special education students have been shown through research where art is included in the curriculum. Art helps children to do better socially and academically; still, the paper reviewed suggests that more extensive research is needed to include and incorporate art in education.

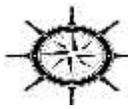


The Art of Science Learning Project (AoSL) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) with Harvey Seifter, as its founder director, used the arts to spark creativity in science education and the development of an innovative 21st Century STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workforce. The project included scientist and artist Todd Siler and Liz Lerman, choreographer, conducted a detailed research workshop on the relationship between the arts, STEM learning and workforce development. Seifter with his staff at the Learning Worlds Institute in New York, held a series of meetings with science educators, to discuss connections between the investigative nature of science and the arts, and an appreciation for the potential of arts-based learning, fostering passion for exploration and discovery in young learners. A proposal was designed, funded by the National Science Foundation (DRL-0943769). The project was initially participated by 425 museum professionals, science educators, teaching artists, business leaders, classroom teachers, academic researchers, and policymakers. The AoSL project was tested in two cities at Worcester, Massachusetts and San Diego, California, with students from high schools in Massachusetts, and early career STEM professionals in California. The sessions were of five-week duration. During these sessions Traditional Innovation Training was replaced by Art-based innovation training and it was found that it improved the creative thinking of the individuals. The skills included divergent critical thinking, problem solving and convergent thinking. The hypothesis that were proved were that Art-based innovative training increased individual collaborative behavior within a team context. It enhanced the novelty, impact and feasibility of team innovation outcomes. It also mentioned a number of improvements in the learning and creative thinking capacity and various other positive results (Kate Haley Goldman, August 3, 2016).

Melissa Collins 2020³ discovered the power of integrating art into the classroom. She says that she was reading the National Board process and now goes out of her was to create opportunities for her second grade students to explore various forms of art with an interdisciplinary approach. She has seen improvement in many students through this art exploration. As she saw her students struggle during the pandemic, with online learning, she decided to try and introduce art and let the students express themselves using art which she thought would be beneficial for their social skills and mental health.

All these different forms and activities produced more interest in the students in handling their normal studies and gave them skills and ways and means of critical and creative thinking and the activities were enjoyed by the students and reduced their frustration and stress level and was also beneficial in countering their negative behavior (Collins, 2023)

This paper talks about children who faced forced migration and resettlement, were refugees in a different land with unfamiliar schooling system, who are in a transit or a resettlement state, where induction of Art-Based approach has proved effective and beneficial. Children having an asylum seeker or refugee status are different and unique, having personal socio-cultural, individual and linguistic attributes. Art-Based method offered an affirming learning space and encouraged individual strength and provided specific help in the areas of weakness (Rachel Burke, 2023).



This paper explored the impact of fine arts education on the psychological well being of students at the undergraduate level at the public and private universities in China, looking at self-efficacy and creativity. It was stated that the most effective medium for expressing culture, emotions, lifestyle, identity, and human ideals is through art. Cross sectional research was done by randomly selecting 376 in the 2022-2023 academic year. It was found out that fine art courses significantly and positively influenced the psychological well being; it also showed that it had improved the self-efficacy and creativity of the students to a great extent. The paper suggested that it was important to incorporate fine art courses in the regular undergraduate studies in Chinese universities. The paper suggests more research on this topic as having fine art education is important and should be added with other courses to boost self-efficacy and creativity in children and to take on board the parents, teachers as well as the students. The paper mentions art being a vital part of science and technology, it helps people think analytically, question, perceive reality clearly, break free from rigid connections, significantly contribute to advancement in society, create novel patterns geared towards development.

Success of a school or university is dependent on students' joy, motivation and fulfillment of their desires and wishes. A high level of educational quality is crucial. Psychological difficulties and stress is common in university students due to various reasons such as living on campus away from home, difference in environment, new people to deal with, unexpected and unwanted situations leading to stress and burnout. In all this art is helpful greatly (Xuguang Jin, 2023).

This report by a team of arts educators at Mario Institute of Education and the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin, gives us the following information:

This paper also says that arts education helps children in many critical ways including improvement of mental health, giving them self confidence, assisting in life skills, sustains natural creativity. The paper suggests more research on the topic as in schools and universities in the US, art education is losing its importance; the public schools and universities are geared towards preparing individuals towards job seeking abilities and trends, thus neglecting the arts (Gayle Roege, July 2013).

Pakistani students face difficulties as our society resists art-based education.

In our society, children are often discouraged from pursuing arts, humanities, and social sciences. Parents prioritize prestigious professions like medicine, engineering, and business due to perceived financial success. Mr. Shahid Abdulla, a senior architect and one of the founders of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, noted that donors were reluctant to support an art institution, preferring to fund medical, business, and engineering schools. While collecting donations for the construction of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and the relocation of the 100-year old Nusserwanjee Building from Kharadar to Clifton, he convinced industrialists and businessmen by telling them that the clothes that they are wearing are made by textile/ fashion designers, and the furniture and equipment they are using in their offices has been made by interior and product designers, and that everything in this world is connected to art and design one way or the other.



Globally, parents often discourage children from studying liberal arts, fearing it lacks financial viability (Pearlstein, 2016). Steven Pearlstein observed that many students, despite enjoying liberal arts, are discouraged by parents who prioritize STEM fields for their financial prospects. Experts like Harvard's Jill Lepore and Debra Humphreys from the Association of American Colleges and Universities agree that parents emphasize STEM subjects, often at the expense of liberal arts. Robert Matz from Mason's College of Humanities and Social Sciences emphasized the efforts to promote liberal arts, despite a notable decline in enrollment. Cal Newport, the author of 'How to Win at College', found that many students select majors to satisfy parental expectations rather than personal interest.

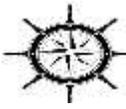
The researcher would like to mention an interview he saw on TV back in the 80s, of the singer Madam Mehnaz and her mother, Kajjan Begum. Kajjan Begum was known for her recitals of *marsias, nohas, naats, hamds, mankabats, etc.*, whilst Mehnaz was more into songs on TV and playback singing in films. Due to this reason their family used to taunt her, and she would get upset. Kajjan Begum mentioned that she once told Mehnaz, 'My daughter, don't confront them', 'there was a harmonium lying in front of them, and she pointed towards it and told her daughter, look at this '*baja*' (musical instrument) lying in front of you, fight with this'. A valuable and sensible advice given by her mother, "just ignore the comments of the world and keep on pursuing your passion".

Rabia Zuberi mentions in her book the constant difficulty of arranging art materials and paints for the school, which she managed by selling artwork. She also had to continuously manage arranging for scholarships for needy students. During the late 80s and early 90s unrest, her students stayed at the Karachi School of Art premises only, to work on their thesis projects, where she also used to make arrangements for their meals. (Husain, Rabia Zuberi Life and Work, 2008). Once a group of ladies visited the Indus Gallery and met Ali Imam, asking him to persuade young artists to donate their artworks for a charity auction, Imam was enraged and told them to contact wealthy businessmen rather than exploit poor struggling artists, with a flick of his pipe he ushered them to go away and they quickly left (Husain, Ali Imam Man of the Arts, 2003).

Educational institutions under fire after so-called Islamization

In Pakistan, since 1977, when the universities became Islamicized, there has been resistance towards art education. The matters got worse after 2000 when a conservative form of Islam evolved. Art departments in some universities have been prohibited from teaching sculpture making, as idolatry is prohibited in Islam. This started and continued during General Zia-Ul-Haq's time. Pervez Hoodbhoy explains that universities have become schools, where there is no intellectual discussion or questioning.

At the Punjab University, students tried to shut down the art and music departments due to the Islamization laws. Both music and arts are under threat at Punjab University due to the Islamization of Zia-Ul Haq (Hays, Higher Education and Universities in Pakistan: History, Islamism, 2008-2019). However, there has been a positive rise in awareness. More and more



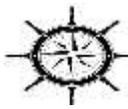
graduates are coming out of universities with degrees in fine arts, design, and architecture. Most of them get jobs in advertising companies and also schools as art teachers; even universities from where they graduate appoint them as TAs' (Teaching Assistants) to support senior teachers. These trainees eventually become lecturers, and then gradually rise in the teaching profession, some along with their private art practice, thus also bringing practical worldly experience into the classroom.

The most effective drawback and discouragement that art students face is, again, from their parents. A person can fight with the world, but cannot manage internal opposition from his/ her own family. Parents who support the child financially and in all aspects do not support the interest and passion of the child, which becomes the most difficult hurdle. Parents need to understand the inclination, the bent of mind, and the interest of the child. All other obstacles can be overcome.

Situation at present

At present, the environment is improving and is favorable. Schools are teaching art, universities are offering degrees where in the previous decades only diplomas and certificates were offered; they are also providing scholarships and financial help to deserving and needy students.

Art education has become a wide canvas. In Pakistan, art is not just drawing and painting, it is much more, and institutes and universities right from Karachi, to Faisalabad and even beyond, especially Quetta and Jamshoro, not to forget the recently established Aror University of Art, Architecture, Design & Heritage, Sukkur, Sindh. On the recommendation of the HEC in 2003, Crafts and Lok Virsa, Islamabad, has also been taken on board and recognized, and has been asked to provide information regarding national heritage. It also recommended improving art education at the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels, and the fine arts degree should be considered as professional, rather than academic. Also, deficiencies and problems in the curriculum were removed, and the Fine Arts Revised Curriculum of a four-year BFA degree included more than a hundred areas in the National Curriculum Revision Meeting held in 2010. A few of these more recognized subjects put under the umbrella of the Fine Arts degree are Glass, Islamic Calligraphy, Miniature Painting, Film and Video, Photography, Ceramics/ Pottery, and Drawing and Painting. The individuals who are teaching arts and design, and now crafts and heritage, have also been recognized and encouraged to equip themselves in pedagogical practice, societal and philosophical measures, and critical inquiries. The meeting highlighted that art education is much more than the production of art and design, and creative practice skills. Teachers as art historians, critics, and themselves artists have a responsibility as part of the community and its citizens, and should take responsibility as administrators, policy-makers, researchers, and educators in their respective fields (Khan, January 2014). Khan also talks about the three phases of art, the Traditional Craft, from 1960, the educational developments from 1960 to 1990, called 'Art in the Academies', and then from 2000 onwards, the 'Art as Industry', with more awareness, importance, and demand for art and the aesthetic sense development in the general public through continuous exposure and easy access and availability, even if not to purchase, but only to look at, see, observe, and appreciate. Also, the government has introduced

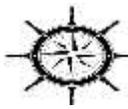


the Competency-Based Training in Art and Design, for the training and improvement of art teachers (Mohani Saif, June 30, 2023). We have come a long way in Art and Design Education, with continuous change, and also inception and recognition of the local crafts and professions, along with the systematic teaching inherited from the British. Other than that, across Pakistan, there are countless NGOs, and individuals in their personal capacity supporting artists as well as craftsmen, Behbud Association, DAACHI Foundation, SAARC (now SAAC), Panchi Crafts by RLCC, SITCO, Pith, Farmer's Market, and The Crafter's Guild are amongst the many. Also, individuals like Muhammad Ahmed Shah, President, Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, through the full support and patronage of the Government of Sindh (Muhammad Ahmed Shah, 2025), Prof. Salima Hashmi, Samira Raja, and Riffat Alvi, are a few to mention. Our malls and shopping centers, Dolmen, Lucky, Ocean, Habitt, and many others, give their spaces from time to time, to young and budding artists to showcase, display, and market their products and skills, so much so that even in events like food melas, and musical concerts spaces are offered to individuals to put up their stalls. The market is demanding, no doubt, and also opportunities are abundant, also, thanks to our online facilities, artists and designers are targeting the international market (Schneider, June 20, 1017).

Moreover, the arts and crafts profession is becoming favorable, slowly and gradually, amongst the parents of the female population of our country. In our Pakistani culture, parents want to marry off their daughters as soon as possible. In this context, if the circumstances for higher education are not favorable, a girl can simply pursue an arts or design diploma. This will give her the technical skills to at least support herself and her family by making crafts such as jewelry, textiles, and other household items. Also, there are opportunities for teaching for ladies who could teach arts, fashion, textiles, interior, and graphics. These girls and ladies can also help in stage decoration and assist in various marriage ceremonies and festivals, etc., and can also create employment in event management-related activities where interaction with the male segment is limited, which is again favorably looked at by their parents and families (Farhana Altaf Qureshi 2021). It has been noted that after the COVID pandemic, more and more girls and women have started making arts and crafts items and are selling them online, thus working from home, or by participating in various crafts melas and fairs arranged by organizations mentioned above, where involvement of men is limited and the majority of the participants are women (Musavvir V. 2025).

Research Methodology

The literature review was done by consulting books written about or by senior artists, designers, architects and teachers of the arts. Also, published papers have been consulted to look at local/inland as well as the global and international perspectives on the teaching of the arts. The qualitative method of study has been adapted and thirty-four art design students were interviewed.



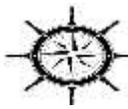
The students were from the following institutions:

1. Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture
2. School of Visual and Performing Arts (SOVAPA), Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi.
3. Karachi School of Art
4. ZVMG Rangoonwala Community Centre.

The students were asked their name (Optional), their institution's name, and their department, degree/ diploma pursuing, the choices were Fine Arts, Communication/ Graphic Design, Textile/ Fashion Design, Architecture/ Interior Design, Music/ Vocals, Theatre/ Drama, Media/ Film & Video, and any other related/ allied field. The main question was, 'what difficulties they faced in selecting/ pursuing their studies in their discipline of interest?' Also, 'were they happy/ satisfied with what they were studying and their plans for the future'. The response was as follows:

Thematic Analysis of thirty-four students interviewed:

1. Six students had difficulty in convincing their parents in letting them pursue studies in the field of their interest.
2. Two students added that as the parents were not in favor, the rest of the family and generally their near acquaintance also were critical and discouraging towards the student's desired field.
3. Five students mentioned having financial problems whilst studying.
4. One student mentioned that s/he had parents' opposition as well as financial difficulties.
5. Nineteen students mentioned that they had no difficulty, they were supported by their parents and they also had financial stability.
6. Four students mentioned that though they were pursuing the field of their interest, they were concerned about the usefulness of the studies in financial security and livelihood in the future.
7. Four students mentioned that they found difficulty in seeking information about art and design courses as they were not widely publicized and there was limited information.
8. Two students were indecisive whether to select Fine Arts, or Design. One of them mentioned it would have been helpful if there were Students' Counselors or Career Counselors to talk to.
9. Two students mentioned that they were taking Fine Art courses due to their liking and interest and were very happy, but taking out the time in their daily life to pursue the same was strenuous.
10. All students were happy and satisfied with what they were studying and most of them were hoping to make a career in the same field.



11. One student complained about the timings of the classes not being convenient to her, another mentioned difficulty in using public transport to come to the centre.

The researcher tried his best to note and record everything he heard from the students. As some were reluctant to talk, the question sheet was given to them to write down their comments on it and return.

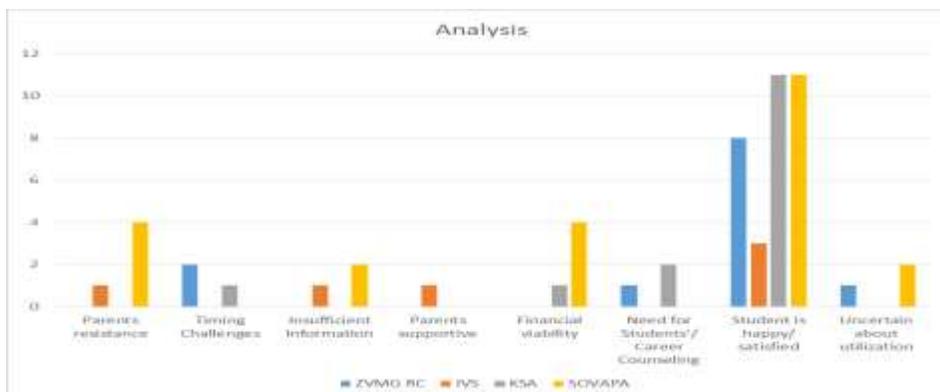
Students of two schools, School of Visual and Performing Arts (SOVAPA), Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, and ZVMG Rangoonwala Community Centre, were most excited and happy to be there; perhaps, as the researcher noticed some of them were from average or lower income background, and still getting the opportunity of pursuing art and design education in prestigious institutions was a big achievement for them.

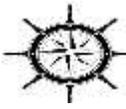
One point here the author wishes to make is that all the above students who were interviewed were studying in art and design institutions, in spite of some having their parents disapproval, but their consent afterwards in the end, and some having financial difficulties but still managed to seek admission, survive and are studying at present. Other than these there may be many who may have wished to study arts but were not given permission by their parents/ family, or due to financial constraints, were not able to seek admission in an art/ design school. The parents simply want their children to pursue either the field of medicine, engineering business studies etc. Still, those with very limited finances simply want their wards to do B.Com, or study bookkeeping and to get into the job market at the earliest to stay afloat.

It is apparent from the above results of the interviews that there were two main constraints that the students find in pursuing art education:

1. Parents are uncomfortable even in today's day and age, thinking that art education may not give financial stability and a decent bread earning guarantee to their children.
2. More finances are needed to pursue art education, compared to other simple, only theoretical educational fields.

Figure 1





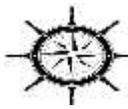
Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Art education has its benefits both for normal children and for the intellectually challenged. Things taught in spoken and written language can be easily expressed through art. It supports students to improve and to succeed in their normal studies, as well as in their day-to-day social interaction (Slice, 2019), it also helps in improving life skills, mental capabilities, and boosts self-confidence (Gayle B. Roege, July 2013). Art education, whether in any field, is overlapping and integrated. A student lacking or weak in a certain medium may easily change his/ her strategy and start working and experimenting in any other form or medium. *“Don’t waste time trying to be good at what you are not.” Tom Lawson, Spring 1989 (Madoff, 2009).* Though art education is expensive, it has its benefits. Also, in today’s time, there is money in art. We hear stories from the past that painters did not have money or food, their paintings did not sell, they used to be in rags, and they died in poverty. Times have changed, and there is development, awareness, and recognition of art, along with diversification, integration, and availability of so many options to an art student and an artist, with ample support from educational institutions, that parents simply need not worry. Universities and educational institutions offering art, design, and architecture degrees are increasing with financial support as well, offering scholarships, financial aid, and *qarz-e hasana* to students on merit and need.

Of course, more research is suggested in the papers consulted, and is needed also, and more awareness, especially to educate parents and our elders, to allow and permit our younger generations to comfortably pursue the same and enjoy its benefits.

If the parents feel reluctant and unsure, it is suggested that they may consult a Students’ Counselor or a Career Guidance Counselor or *simply visit the institutions when they organize open houses and thesis displays, and talk to enrolled and graduating students and their teachers.* At the opening ceremony of the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi’s students’ thesis display in 2025, Mr. Ahmed Shah announced that all artwork on display by their students today has already been sold (Muhammad Ahmed Shah, 2025). Now, schools in Pakistan have started appointing counselors, who have discussions and meetings with the students as well as the parents, to guide them according to the child’s interests and bent of mind. Though the counselors say that whatever advice they give to the students, mostly the parents do not agree with it; also, at times, the parents tell the child to stop going to the counselor and not to listen to him/ her. (Personal Narration February 1, 2020). Extracts from the Keynote Speech and sessions conducted by Student Counselors at the International Education Expo held at the Pearl Continental Hotel, Karachi. This thinking needs to change as the meeting between the teacher, the counselor, and the parent is never an argument; it is always a cordial discussion, as the aim is the same for all, the benefit of the child, and everyone is concerned with his/ her welfare and success. Of course, there is a need to have more trained counselors in schools, colleges, and universities (Bari, August 29, 2025).

Times are changing; there is a demand for professional artists and designers in every field of life, be it advertising, book illustration and publishing, or radio (FM) and television channels; there is

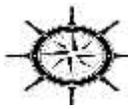


no place where an artist or a designer is not needed (Husain, Rabia Zuberi Life and Work, 2008). Just look at any industry, from sales and marketing to the extent of one small example of pharmaceuticals, where, whilst standing in a chemist's shop, the researcher observed, by only looking at the boxes and packaging of medicines, noticing so much hard work has been done by artists, and so much artwork and color has gone into it (Medico, 2025). There is a lot of scope and also money, for the child who has an interest and is willing to work hard, and of course, with the support of parents (Farhana Altaf Qureshi, 2021).

Rabia Zuberi, in her book (Husain, Rabia Zuberi Life and Work, 2008), mentioned that she didn't expect to churn out Picassos at the Karachi School of Art, though on her tour to Europe, she met many of her students and other Pakistani artists working in Paris and other European countries in prestigious positions. Also, whilst going through NUKTAART (Farrukh, 2010), NIGAAH (Muhajir, 2023), ADA ARCHITECTURE DESIGN ART (Aslam, 2022), ADA ICONICA (Raza, 2024), A+i Architecture + Interiors (Hussain, 2020), and various other art magazines, one can safely say that our artists are standing side by side in the world along with other foreign international graduates, be it from the Rhode Island School of Design, Central Saint Martins, or even from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, for that matter.

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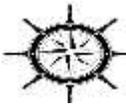
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