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from a g rao

Mud gems

- *Knowledge is required to help others not mere good intentions!*

Recent additions

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Design projects

My thoughts

19th, May, 2016

Internships in craft sector

a g rao

Internships for design students have high value. Students get introduced to the real life practice situation. Industries and Design offices are more prepared over the years to handle design students as interns. But Craft sector mostly managed by NGOs need better structures to get full benefit of internships.

Crafts offer soul nourishing to design students!

At one time IDC was not ready to consider craft experience equal to industrial experience. Soon it was realized that many students were already exposed to Industry. Engineers and Architects after working for a year in Industry or design offices, discover 'Studying Design' as a better option, especially if they have an innovative or art bent of mind! Many were interested to explore new areas. Only in 2001 or so, some IDC students of product design went to Nagaland to work in Bamboo & cane crafts. Now many students from PD and Mobility make internship in craft as their choice. The recent focus on 'Innovation' and 'rural market' have enhanced this trend. If we look at objectively craft sector offers many benefits to design students. To start with students get exposed to rural sector and they start knowing the social dimension of design. Often they are given freedom to identify a

problem and solve it. Hands on experience of working with the actual materials becomes an advantage.

If we look at Bamboo craft, varieties of Bamboo vary as per the region. It would be very difficult to get a chance to work with 6 to 8mm thick green bamboo unless one is in Kerala! Even bending of such thick bamboo is a special skill local craftsmen have acquired!

With many design institutes, craft institutes and NIFTs coming up in the country today a large number of interns are opting for 'craft sector'! Time periods change from 6weeks to 6months! Some institutions like Shristi have a craft entrepreneurship programme meshed with internships. Faculty members follow up student-work in many ways. Sometimes prior contact with a buyer and a 'marketing event' are planned in advance, before 'internship' starts! Such integrated approach surely can bring better results! In craft sector 'strategic thinking for products' is still missing. A product strategy for craft products needs to be developed even before design!. Crafts need to operate in the overall strategic positioning of the product which can give an advantage. Competing with industrially produced products like 'furniture' or 'toys' has many challenges. Often NGOs are not well geared up to suggest or define right problems which students can tackle within the given time and with their limitation in experience. Recently when I was with 'Uravu' an NGO, an interesting debate took place! Some in the organization felt that 'internships' were of little use and a drag on their resources! No doubt raw materials get wasted in learning in initial stages. Hands on experience has its cost! NGOs also need to provide support of craftsmen, which is expensive in states like Kerala. A policy frame work is urgently needed to tackle some of these problems.

Some possibilities:

- Budgeting for materials and skilled labour can be done by the design schools which send the students.
- A collaborative scheme can be worked out with the NGOs to get some Govt finding !
- Open design schools and innovation centers could look at 'internships' and create support systems as part of their mandate.
- CSR funding can also become a major Component!
- NGOs can also look at the possibility of getting funding for supporting 'internships' This can include stay & food for students.
- MHRD and DST sponsored projects can make a provision to support interns as part of the project.

There is a role for experienced designers to bring out market ready craft products! This can become part of some of the support mechanisms!

I also see the possibility of private design entrepreneurship, like coaching for entrance test in design, coming up for taking care of 'internships' CSR support could be one possibility for such entrepreneurship.

A two day workshop/seminar will make a good beginning in this direction!
