

“Design is an evolving knowledge industry opportunity that India needs to wake up to at the earliest”

As in most fields of academics today, design education is also facing tougher challenges as the first decade of 21st century ends in turbulence on many fronts. The approach to design education in post-independent India had been crafts and skills oriented set very much in an apprenticeship mode whereas today design has to break boundaries and discover the merging areas and the leading edge of various domains and their interfaces.

India is now in the throes of change in many spheres and the deep socio-economic changes portend a new India on the anvil with “1986 new value generation” taking reins by 2020. The sweeping winds of change affect the profession of design and therefore the approach to both under-graduate and post-graduate design education and training programmes need to be redesigned as we prepare GenNext designers.

It has been indicated by several studies that a country which embraces design as a tool for accelerated economic development also creates a very competitive economy with sustainable advantages, while at the same time fulfilling consumer needs with creative products and services that the people regard as their own.

Indeed, proud are the people of those countries that have produced international brands successfully – the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and in the recent years South Korea. There is great respect in the world for their designs and creative talent and prowess.

In this sense, the name that few sectors like information technology, textiles and apparel have brought to Made in India brand needs to be extended to several other sectors so that Designed in India achieves a prominent place.



Dr Darlie Koshy, director general for AEPC's education and training initiatives, was invited by the Brighton University last month to deliver a keynote address during its 150 anniversary celebration seminar.

He spoke on designing design education for 21st century India. Excerpts from his speech:



The following two areas for design interventions are in my view critical for first phase of design development in a developing economy:

Design development through an integrated strategic approach for upgrading small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to create a global presence and recognition of India's widespread entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen. This is a matter of both necessity and urgency in the context of maintaining a growth trajectory and for employment generation.

Another focus for design in development is in the area of services both public and private wherein design intervention could potentially have a positive impact on the lives of millions in India.

Design is an evolving knowledge industry opportunity that India needs to wake up to at the earliest and like all other knowledge industries, the principal force driving growth and opportunity is an adequate, technically qualified human resource base.

China is reported to have over 400 schools offering design courses that together graduate about 10,000 industrial designers annually, up from just above 1,500 or so five years ago. In Britain, it is

estimated through a survey in 2003-04 that the employment of design sector is 185,000 with at least 134,000 designers.

India has less than 5,000 qualified industrial and communication designers. There is a need to design a robust futuristic curriculum that assists in achieving the goal of creating appropriate “hands on, minds on” talents for diverse sectors of industry and services.

Another fundamental and important step is to blend technical educational streams in engineering, medicine and other professional courses with the envelope of design.

To begin with, all Indian Institutes of Technology and National Institutes of Technology across India need to introduce a suitable and appropriate design course among the essential courses needed for programme completion.

A target of developing about 10,000 to 15,000 design majors annually in the next three to five years will need about 2,000 teachers of design. Extensive centres for faculty development and training in conjunction with a few strategic domestic and foreign universities need to be funded as a first step in achieving our goals.