Art and Higher Education in Pakistan - A Perception Study

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Art and Higher Education in Pakistan-A Perception Study

Huma Baqai *   Maria Hassan Siddiqui †

Abstract: *The British initiated formal art education in Pakistan, but at the time of independence, only a few tertiary-level formal art education options were available. Later, art departments were established in universities, but the pursuit had never been a policy preference. Art remained a privilege, for both education and career. This paper reports the findings of a study conducted to gauge Pakistani stakeholders' perception of Art as a higher education option, eliciting data from a premier art school in the country. The study was designed to determine if stakeholders perceive the institute as elitist and how do they evaluate the institute's academic quality. A mixed-method approach was used for data collection: including surveys, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. Research participants were classified into four major groups: the institute's students, parents, alumni, employers, as well as students of competitors. SPSS was used for quantitative data analysis and text analysis to identify major themes of interviews. Data indicate that the institute is perceived as elitist by all the respondent groups. The perception is consolidated by demographic data, including residential areas and the family income. Communication Design programme was identified as the most popular whereas Fine Art as the least popular. The study confirms the hypothesis that art education is considered elitist, so is the institute. However, the thrust is more social than intellectual. Policy and social support, as well as intellectual enhancement, are imperative for the acceptability of Fine Art as a career choice among youngsters. Resource allocation is imperative for improved Communication Design programmes which, in turn, can improve graduates' employability, at the national level as well as at the international level.*

Keywords: Art education, Pakistan, higher education, perception.

Introduction

Art Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, art as a means of expression has suffered from serious impediments for reasons rooted not in the capacities of citizens but the societal makeup. Religious considerations and socioeconomic placement have hindered the promotion of artistic expression of culture and tradition, and scholarship in art. The complexity led to a contrast, where at one hand art and its pursuit would be perceived as achievable by the elite but on the other it would remain undesirable by the middle and lower-middle classes due to socioeconomic considerations; hence talented young people prefer not to pursue art as a career option despite their flair and capability. For some segments, religious beliefs serve as a

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deterrent for such a pursuit. Right from the inception, Art education was considered to be either placed 'in service of nation-building efforts' or reduced to 'craft' (Peshkin, 1964). The secondary research supports this notion as several enthusiastic young students who are passionate about arts could not translate it into a successful career path despite their motivation and skills.

The concept of art education has been fuzzy in Pakistan; the sensibility about it is still in its developmental stages. Pragmatic considerations of the majority of the population give priority to other disciplines over Art, deeming it to be a 'soft option' for a career path as compared to technical education. On the other hand, art education is perceived as an option meant for the elite only.

Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) was founded in 1989 by a group of professional designers, architects, and artists to address the need for an Arts School in Karachi. In June 1994, IVS was given charter by the Government of Sindh, Pakistan. The school offers degrees in Architecture, Design, and Fine Arts (Indus Valley, 2018). The freshman year, termed as 'The Foundation Year' introduces students to the fundamentals of Arts Education before they opt for specialization. The Faculty of Architecture includes the Department of Architecture, offering a five-year undergraduate degree and the Department of Interior Design with a four-year undergraduate programme. The Faculty of Design offers a four-year program exploring the affordances of using visual language to translate concepts and ideas into comprehensive, tangible images for a myriad of purposes. The faculty has two departments, Communication Design and Textile Design. The Department of Fine Arts undergraduate program helps students understand contemporary as well as traditional art through a range of media. Liberal Arts stream is a graduation requirement at the IVS which covers the history of art & design, humanities, and social sciences. The shared emphasis of the sub-disciplines of Liberal Arts includes research and writing practices (Indus Valley, 2018).

The purpose of this project was to study extensively one art school through perception analysis of stakeholders and understand the perceptual trends about art education in the country. The research project comprises of the perceptive analysis of the institute from four lenses of four major stakeholders of IVS that are students, parents, alumni, and employers.

Literature Review

The History of Art Education at Tertiary Level

Art is a form of human expression; the history of Art investigates pursuits of aesthetic engagement through its various manifestations and history of Art Education looks into the same as done either in an academic setting or through a formal apprenticeship. Efland (1990), while exploring the social history of art education, associates the concept of 'common school art' to the post- industrialization wave of educational reforms and emphasizes

the significance of post-World War I progressive education movement in the context of art education. Janson, Janson, and Janson (1962); DiMaggio (1987), attempting to trace journey of art as a medium of expression, identified medieval and modern arts as distinct paradigms of this mode of expression. Wheras, Dewey (2005) focuses on art as a fulfilling experience and not a mere medium of expressing culture, "Every art communicates because it expresses. Communication is the process of creating participation."

Considering scholarship on South Asian traditions, (Wolters & Wolters, 1999) argues that the presence of art in the region can be traced back to early Indus Valley civilization, much earlier than the inception of formal institutions for art education, not only through the patronage of monarchs and nawabs, in courts but also as a mode of expression by the populace. The advent of Islam is believed to have brought Arab art traditions to the region due to rulers' tilt towards Arab identity. Hence, calligraphy also found its way in the South Asian milieu.

Even before the formal inception of art schools or institutes was thought of, art as a form of expression existed in these regions. Furthermore, Elliott (2004) introduces us to the beginning of the calligraphic era in her book History of Calligraphy. Although the subject remains quite disputed, popular belief holds that this art began from the Arab Peninsula, because of the necessity to copy Qur'anic verses and preserve them.

The first mention of an Art school could arguably be in 400 BC Greece, as mentioned in Plato's writing. The Greek expression left traces in the form of statues of gods and goddesses and through visual narratives of battles on everyday items. Later these were considered artifacts by historians and art researchers. In Europe, Art was taught through the Atelier Method, whereby apprentices were taken on by artists and learning to draw was imperative. A calendar year would be dedicated to drawing alone, followed by six years of grinding colors, preparing panels, and using gold leaf. Drawing practice would continue during the later phases. The apprenticeship continued for another six years to master fresco and tempera painting.

Higher Education in Art- South Asian Chronicle

The first formal art school in South Asia, The Madras School of Art, was established in Chennai. According to (Chakarvarthy, 2009) this " treasure trove of books on art" was established in 1850 by Dr. Alexander Hunter, which had been taken over by the government in 1852 and renamed as 'The Government School of Industrial Arts.' Presently, the institute is known as The Government College of Fine Arts.

Another prominent art school of the region with historical significance is 157 years old Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata- one of the oldest art colleges in India (https://gcac.edu.in/, 2017), set up in the industrial hub of British India. In addition to the above, Sir JJ School of Arts Bombay was also established by the imperials. An important development was the counter-narrative to industrial revolution presented by the Arts and Crafts Movement (1860-1910) which had an impact on the art scene of South Asia (Tarapor, 1980).

The Evolution of Art Education in Pakistan

An active member of the movement, John Lockwood Kipling, was the founder-principal of Mayo School of Industrial Art, Lahore (1875)- the only art school established in what had to become present-day Pakistan. The school was not only restructured but was also renamed as National College of Arts after the independence (https://www.nca.edu.pk/introduction, 2018). For long, NCA served as the only reputable national-level college in the field. Although Karachi has been a major city of the country, the first academic endeavour for art enthusiasts materialized in 1964 in the name of Karachi School of Arts. The school still offers a range of programmes including Fine Art and architecture. In addition to the above, art departments were established in various universities in the country.

An aspect worth a mention is that a part of the newly established country (East Pakistan) got separated in 1971, within twenty-five years of independence. The part had a rich cultural and artistic lineage; movements and initiatives that started there had a profound impact on what is present-day Pakistan. For clarity, this discussion would focus on areas that remained in Pakistan.

Post-independence Lahore had a vibrant art scene, whereas Karachi's initial participation could not come any closer; the city gradually developed its art-focused momentum. Artists from the Lahore group served the cause of art through active experimentation. However, artists and art enthusiasts elsewhere in the country were not appreciative of contemporary forms and trends. The disparity among the artists in terms of exposure to Western traditions and global developments contributed to the divide. Nevertheless, the modernist approach gradually paved its way; artists from East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) were among trendsetters and influencers. Access to developments on Abstract Expressionism opened new horizons, even for artists who were not formally trained. It was furthered by the gradual establishment of several art schools in the country.

Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) was the first art school in Karachi to offer degree-level education in the fields of Art and Design, including Architecture. IVS' journey from perception to reality mirrors many such stories of a great initiative, the realization of the dreams of a few visionary architects to address the need of establishing a high-quality art school in the biggest city of the country.

Perception of Art Education in Pakistan

Art education is, usually, not a policy priority. Therefore, the realization in the implementation phase remains tentative and is often subject to abrupt change (Chong, 2017). A generally held perception is that art education is for the rich and the elite. Students from unprivileged backgrounds get to fight simultaneously on economic and social fronts.

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS)

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) was established in 1989 by a set of architects, designers, and artists (Ahmed, 2011). IVS is under the patronage of the Governor of Sindh and is a not-for-profit, non-commercial institution and is managed by an Executive Committee through the Executive Director, under the control of an independent Board of Governors" (N.A, About IVS, 2014). IVS, under the patronage of the Governor of Sindh, is a 'not-for-profit, non-commercial institution and is managed by an Executive Committee through the Executive Director, under the control of an independent Board of Governors'.

Research Design and Methodology

For this study, research participants were classified into four major groups: IVS students, parents, alumni, and employers. Also included in the study were respondents studying in competitor institutes. A one-on-one comparative analysis was not possible. A mixed-method approach was used for data collection and the tools included surveys (including electronic surveys), focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. SPSS was used for quantitative data analysis, and text analysis to identify major themes of interviews.

Categorized respondents were subdivide where needed. For example, students' cohort has three subcategories: Current, prospective and alumni. Employers were subdivided into current/ traditional, unconventional, and prospective. Students from competitors were divided according to their institutional affiliation. Parents were treated as one group.

Surveys

Customized questionnaires were developed for each of the categories. The surveys were conducted manually as well as online through google docs; the respondents had the choice to pick either. Questions for each sub category were synchronized to avoid any perceived disparity.

Focus Group Discussion: Focus Groups Discussions were conducted with current students and alumni. The themes covered in the questionnaires were further explored for an in-depth understanding.

Semi-structured Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the employers (14), parents and prospective students to gain their insight on the themes covered in focus group discussions.

Data Collection

Participants were asked for their responses on their perception about the school being elitist. Students groups, including current, alumni, and prospective candidates, were also asked about their residential areas. Another aspect for which students gave their insights

on comparative programme evaluation within the institute and that of the school with its competitors in different fields. Parents were to contribute through their assessment of the cost of study at the school. The employers' input informed about their assessment of IVS graduates in comparison to others and their preferences.

A total of 126 responses for online questionnaires were gathered and analyzed for errors and response biases with 15 being rejected by the research team. These responses were collected using the Google Docs and were analyzed using the statistical package for Social Sciences(SPSS). Out of the accepted 111 responses of the research team, 7 were rejected by SPSS as invalid and statistical analysis were run on these responses only. As per the reliability test of SPSS, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.368 has been attained which depicts that the results of this survey are fairly reliable

# Major Findings

Is IVS Elitist?
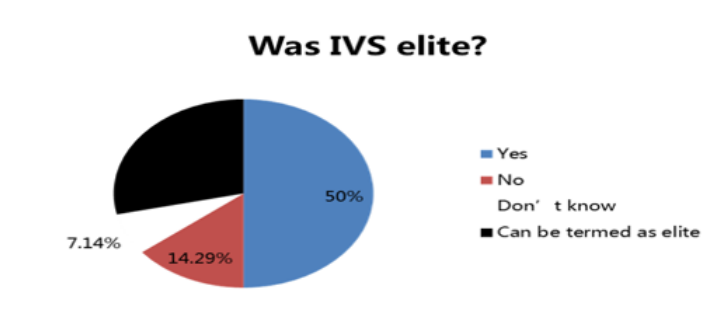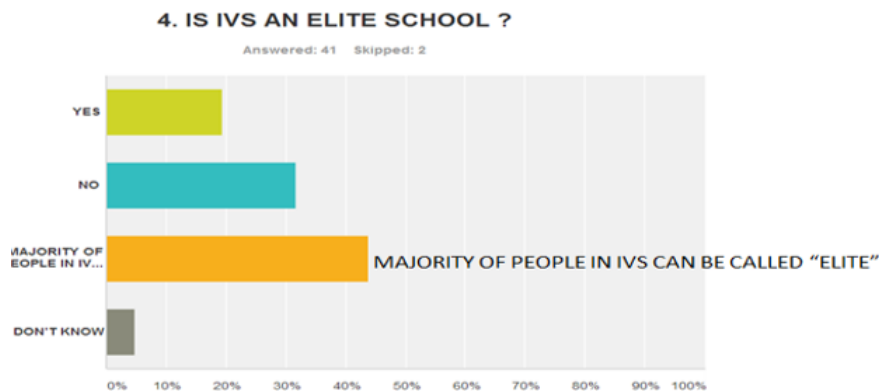
One the major questions asked to researched participants was if they consider the art school to be elitist. Elite is defined as " a group or class of persons enjoying superior

intellectual or social or economic status." The following graphs represent the Current Students and Alumni respondents' input respectively.

Prospective Students: Students Enrolled in High Schools

"I think Indus Valley School is an Elite School," says a prospective student from an elite A Levels School.
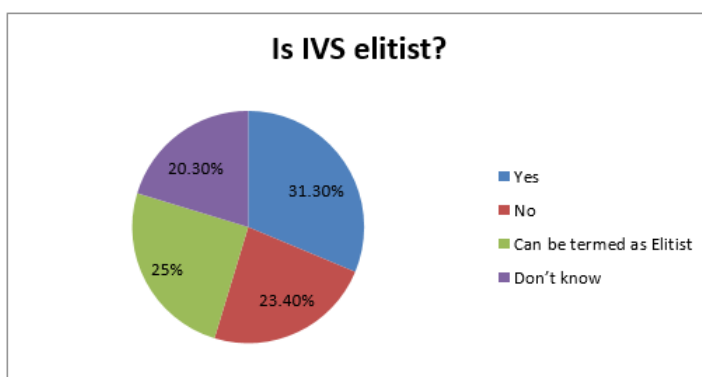

Employers: Representing a Diverse Range of Entities and Organization
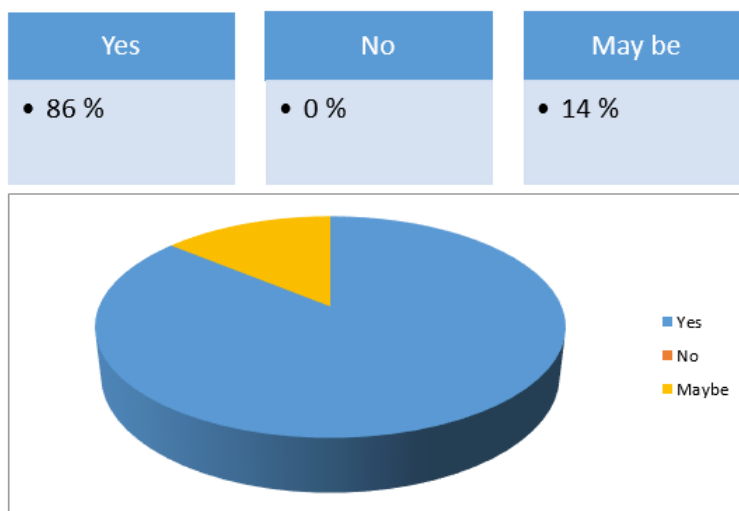
The data clearly indicate that the school is perceived as elite by all the major stake-holder. Prospective students' affirmative response percentage is the lowest; however, their age group and understanding of the term can be a factor worth considering. Whereas the employers' response rate was the highest. The affirmative response rate of the current students and alumni were considerably close.

Areas of Residence- Current and Prospective Students

In order to gauge better the notion of elitism, the current students and alumni were also asked about their areas of residents and the current students were asked about average monthly family income. The following graphs represent the Alumni and Current Students respondents' input respectively.
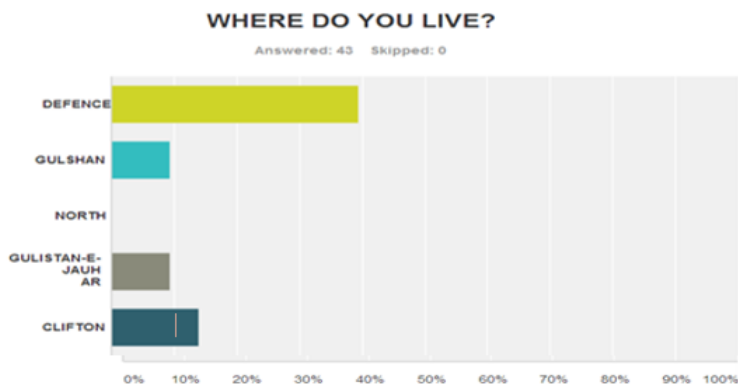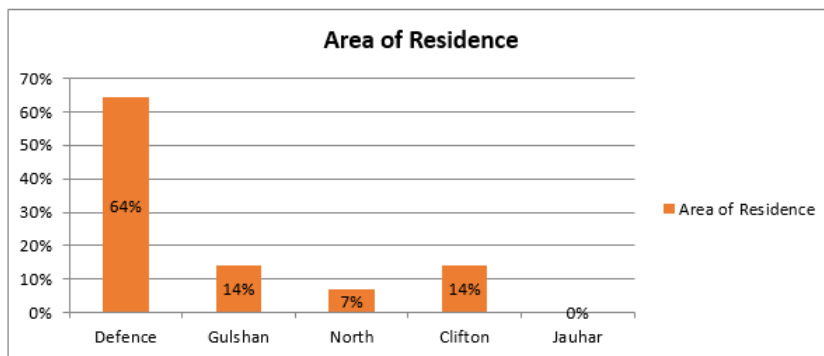

Majority of the respondents, from both the respondent groups, come from Defence/Clifton (SEC A). Representation of Gulshan / North (SEC B) is around 20% for both the groups whereas that of Johar (SEC C) is neglible. Whereas Gulshan, North and Johar have representation of both SEC B and C; Gulshan and North are considered to have more of

SEC B and less of SEC C, whereas it is the opposite for Johar. However, the representation of Johar has changed from 0 % in Alumni data to 10% in the case of current students. The responses to this question corresponds with the responses reporting perception of the school being elitist.

The correlation analysis showed moderate correlations between residential locality and intellectual status and social status of IVS with factors 0.349 and 0.315, respectively. Whereas, the correlation between residential locality and economic status is weak with a factor of 0.083.
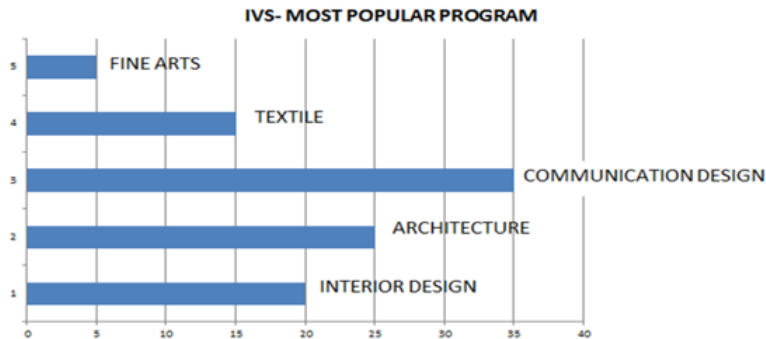
Average Family Income

The current students were also asked to report an approximation of their family income. The figures indicate that 65% students report that their family income to be in SEC B or above. Responses to the different questions indicate that all major stakeholders consider the school to be elitist; the perception is validated through data on students' residential areas as well as family incomes.

WHICH CATEGORY BEST DESCRIBES THE MONTHLY INCOME OF YOUR FAMILY?

Answered: 41   Skipped: 2
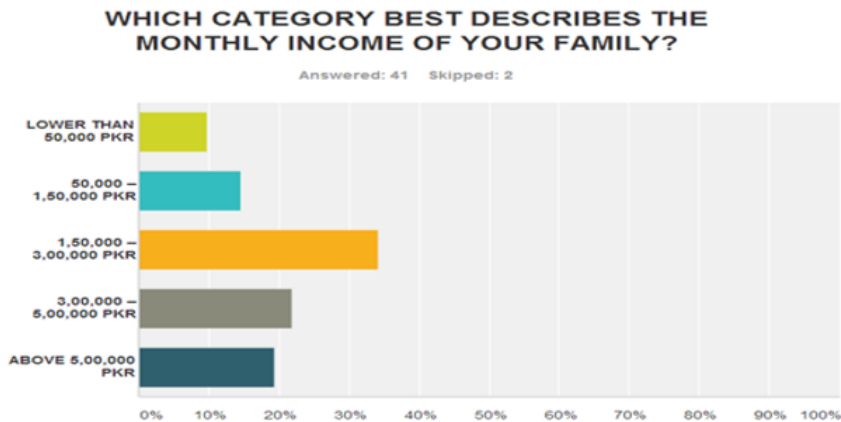
An Evaluation of Academic Programmes at IVS

Most Popular Programmes

Current students were asked to rate programmes offered in terms of the popularity among students. Communication Design turned out to be the most popular whereas Fine Art as the least popular programme.

IVS- MOST POPULAR PROGRAM

Program	Value
FINE ARTS	5
TEXTILE	15
COMMUNICATION DESIGN	35
ARCHITECTURE	25
INTERIOR DESIGN	20

(bar chart: FINE ARTS ≈5, TEXTILE ≈15, COMMUNICATION DESIGN ≈35, ARCHITECTURE ≈25, INTERIOR DESIGN ≈20; x-axis 0–40)

Comparative Analysis: The Most Preferred VS the Least Preferred

Table 1 summarizes students' rationale for their choice of programme as presented during Focus Group Discussions. Whereas, employability remains a major consideration, the quality of programme and faculty appear to be equally important considerations.

Table 1

Why Communication Design?	Fine Arts, Why Not?
Foreign qualified, highly Skilled faculty	Dull Curriculum
Scope and job opportunities	Limited Employability
More interesting than other programs	Limited Expertise of faculty

Similar Programmes Offered by Competitors

The institute has various partial competitors. These institutes offer similar programmes, but no institute covers the entire range of offered at IVS. Therefore, a comparative analysis would consider relevant competitors for each of the programmes offered at the institute. Table 2 and Table 3 map IVS curriculum alongside similar offerings at other institutes.

Table 2

Programs	Universities/Institutes	Level of Courses / Programmes
Architecture and Interior Design	NED University of Engineering & Technology	Undergraduate
	Sir Syed University of Engineering & Technology	Undergraduate
Communication Design	Karachi School of Arts	Diploma
		Certificate
Textile Design	Karachi School of Arts	Diploma/ Certificate
	Textile Institute of Pakistan	Undergraduate
Fine Arts	Karachi University	Undergraduate
	Karachi School of Arts	Diploma/ Certificate

Table 3

| Institute	Range of Programmes
KSA	Fine Arts, Communication Design, Textile Design, Digital Media, Fashion Design
KU	Fine Arts, Islamic Art , Art History , Textile Design, Design & Media Arts, Industrial Design, Ceramics & Glass, Architecture
TIP	Textile Design Technology , Textile Science, · Textile Management in Marketing, Apparel Manufacturing and Merchandizing , Fashion Design Management
NED	Architecture
SSUT	Architecture

The institute has a niche as none of the competitors offer the range of options; the level of qualification for each option is also a unique selling point for IVS, being the only choice for a degree-level education for all the faculties. One of the reasons of the popularity of Communication Design among students can be the fact that it is not offered at degree level anywhere else in the city.

Table 4

Credentials	IVS	KSA	KU	TIP	NED	SSUET
Location	Clifton	Gulshan-e- Iqbal	University of Karachi	National Highway	Saddar	Gulshan-e- Iqbal
Tuition Fee /Semester	Rs. 116,500	Rs. 30,000	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 86,400	Rs. 7,700	Rs. 110,000
Registration Fee	Rs. 40,000	Rs. 19,000	Rs. 1,500	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 3,800	N/A
Transport Facility	Not available	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available

The perception of Elitism can also be gauged through the lens of fee structures. Even disregarding diploma/ certificate programmes, the cost of a degree at IVS is higher with each of the competitors offering a degree programme. Moreover, the location is an elite neighbourhood in a farthest southern corner, and accessibility for residents of far-flung areas is limited due to the non-availability of college transport.

## Perception of Programme Quality
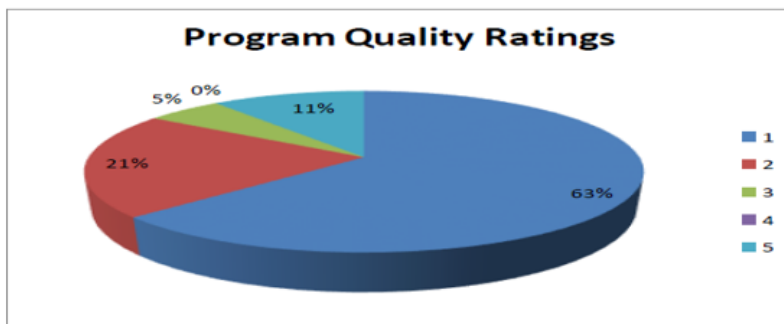
1= most important, 5= Least important

In view of the above, programme quality emerges as of utmost importance for the institute. The following figure summarizes students' perception of the competitive advantage of their school. Students consider porgramme quality as the most important feature. During FGDs participants evaluated University of Engineering and Technology (NED) and Textile Institute of Pakistan (TIP) as having competitive over their institute in terms of infrastructure in their respective areas.

Significance of Faculty

Whereas, students participants from the majority of the institutes rated significance of faculty as 'most important', assessment of the quality of faculty at IVS was mixed; some perceive the institute's faculty as highly qualified and experienced whereas others appear skeptical about the caliber of the faculty. For respondents, faculty's encouragement in a student's "discover thyself" journey is imperative.

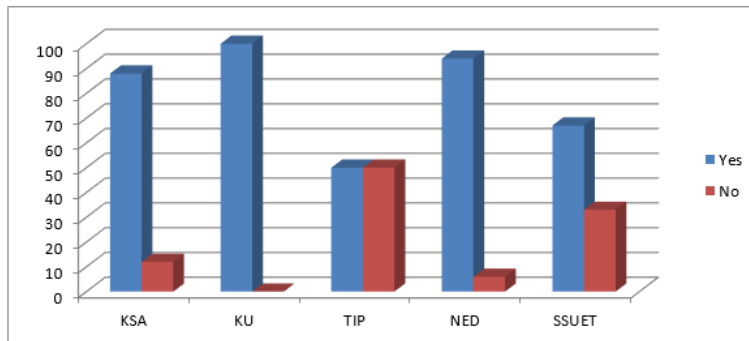1=most important
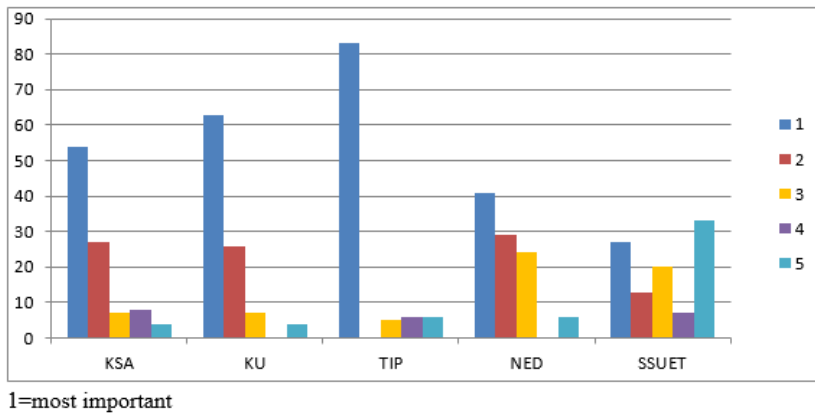
Programme Cost

Students of Same Institute

As established earlier, the student body at the institute can be categorized as economic elite, with a few exceptions. Despite their economic class, the cost of the programme, appears to be high to the students. More than 90% of the students would consider the fee affordable, but they find the running cost to be beyond manageable. All the students noted that the institute is not affordable to students from SEC B and C.

Parents of the institute's students appear to be hit by the cost of the studies, especially by the running cost. A word frequency analysis showed that 29 respondents used the word "expensive" to associate to Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Whereas the frequency of the word "can't afford" is 24.

Students of Other Institutes

Is IVS 'expensive' as compared to your university?

Does Tuition Fee Affect Admission Decision?
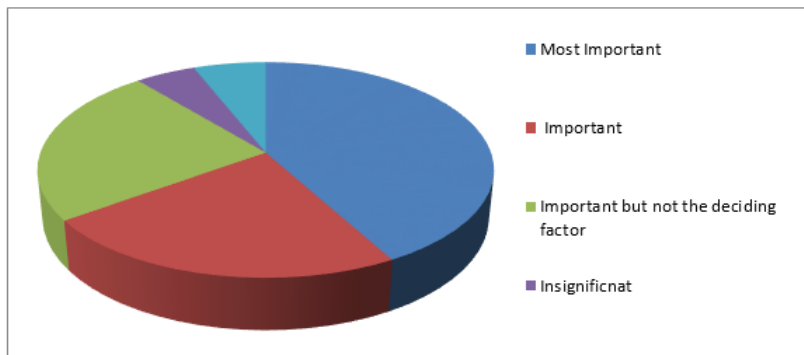
For 42 % of the respondents, tuition fee is the most important for university decision making. Most of the respondents find IVS as more expensive than their universities/ institutes. Perceptions seems to be bigger than reality; an overwhelming 97% of the parents consider the institute to be expensive which higher than the response of students for the same category.

Employers' Perception

Employers report that they, generally, hire candidates on the basis of their abilities and skill set. Such a decision is taken on merit with no consideration for a specific art school. However, hiring processes are expertise specific; architecture graduates are hired on project basis whereas textile and graphic designing graduates are hired as full time, permanent employees. Employers identify demand-supply disparity in available human resources

for their organizations/ entities. They feel that art school should be producing more graduates, especially in the domains of graphic designing in the context of global surge in the demand of design graduates, underscored by the flexibility allowing employment options regardless of border and work visa constraints.

Employers also consider IVS as an elite school with its pros and cons. IVS graduates are believed to be more informed about esthetics but to be lacking in practical experience and exposure. They are also considered to posse better interpersonal skills as compared to the graduates from other art schools.

Gender Representation

Since the sampling was done randomly from the volunteers, the emerging data on gender is considered to be representing the entire student body of IVS . The majority of IVS students were of the view that 'art' is a female-sought field; whereas business, accounting or armed forces are male-oriented fields. More than 70 percent of IVS students rationalize that men, who do not pursue their tertiary/ higher education seriously, opt for art schools resulting in gender ratio disparity among the student body.

Discussion

The mixed-method qualitative design, aided with the demographic data of participants, indicates perceptions, nuances, expectations and future directions. This section situates the data into the larger discourse and will attempt to map the findings with the perceptions, realities and perceived future directions for art education, art school, and aspirants of art and design at the national level.

All the cohorts of research participants consider the institute as elitist. The two groups of research participants from within the institute also endorse the perception. However, research participants from other institutes categorize students of the institute understudy as economic elite only, not surpassing those in other universities/ institutes intellectually. Demographic data confirms the notion as most of the student body of the institute resides in areas termed as SEC A and B. A compulsive correlation between higher family income and options of art education is indeed problematic; giving in to the notion that impoverished are not capable of producing high-quality art and cannot handle purity of creativity defies logic. An enabling environment celebrating imagination, aesthetics, and ingenuity are imperative to encourage capable human capital.

Another important data point was the evaluation of academic programmes offered at the institute. The tell-tale findings show an obvious correlation between the pursuit of a degree and the employability of graduates. Communication Design is identified as the most sought after programme at the institute, followed by Architecture and Textile Design; whereas, Fine Art being the least considered option. Moreover, alumni network and job placement appeared important to the students. In the present globalized market place where geographic and political boundaries transcend in several fields, with highest in the history freelancers blurring the home-office compartmentalization, Communica-

tion Design as a field offers all that young graduates would need for better employability exploring options beyond their geographic confines. The findings, however, also call for policymakers' attention for inclusive education and economic policies, with some sustainable patronage mechanisms for 'art for art sake' (Oscar Wilde).

Level of qualification, range of programmes, cost, and location are important factors for students' decision making. Comparative analysis indicates that the high cost of higher education serves as a deterrent; at times, the best options are not considered for being unaffordable. However, the level of degree is also deemed to be important. The institute has the edge in offering a range of degrees with undergraduate options as compared to the other institute; some offer little or no diversity in programmes offered whereas others are not compatible in terms of the level of qualification. Programme quality is yet another significant marker. Students of the institute, even if they are appreciative of a particular programme, they recognize more enabling infrastructure at other universities as a definite advantage for competitors. Therefore, the institute understudy in particular and higher education options, in general, should ensure the provision of cutting-edge infrastructure for a world-class higher education experience to their students.

Faculty is inevitably significant for a university, research participants from universities appear to agree unanimously. The quality of faculty is perceived as positively correlated to the quality of a programme. In the context of the institute under discussion, faculty expertise and capacity were identified as the second most important factor after employability, as was obvious in the huge gap between the choices of communication design and fine art. In a socio-economic milieu where fine art is marginalized and relegated, and is not considered worthy of being a serious life-long pursuit, the need for nurturing aesthetic sensibility, sensitivity, and patronage becomes paramount. In case of lack of employment options and earning opportunities, unconventional employers can be explored in this regard. These are employers that, historically, have not been offering placements for art graduates but have recently emerged as potential employers for fine art graduates as well as design graduates.

Gender imbalance emerges as a factor worth considering. Whereas the major figures in the world of art are men, it appears normative that art school students comprise more women, even for degree-level education. In the Pakistani context, this can be better understood if analyzed concerning the social norms and preferences. In urban centres, at least, the number of women students at high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels have increased significantly. However, this representation is not translated neatly into the same representation levels in the job market. In some segments of society, female members of a family are not allowed to enter into the professional world despite the perceived need for a certain level of education, primarily for grooming and better marriage prospects. Hence, art education becomes a viable option for not being as competitive as other fields and also for women-dominant institutional settings. A deterrent for men could the starting salaries for art graduates which is considerably low as compared to those offered to fresh graduates from other fields.

Conclusion

In a knowledg- driven global market place, education is perceived as intrinsically linked to career options and employability. It, however, is not a conducive scenario for young individuals trying to equate passion with profession. Bringing together the data, it can be established that IVS is generally perceived as an elitist school. Whereas the definition of elite remained subjective, most of the respondents hold the view that it refers to privileged social and economic status. From within the student research participants, 74%alumni, 64% current, and 51.6 % prospective students. This perception could be consolidated by two factors that contributed to data, students' residence and family income bracket, both ranging from SEC B and A. Interestingly, in the case of employers the notion 'elite' dangle from positive to negative varying from employer to employer; whereas, for some such 'elite' candidates / employees can become a liability due to lack of grit and tenacity, for others this 'elite' approach benefits them through nuanced design strategy and a more in-depth understanding of global perspectives.

Major consider for a youngster while deciding to study art, determining which institution would be the best bargain, including programme cost, programme quality, the expertise of faculty, future prospects. The order may differ for different individuals. Hence, high cost of a degree can become a deterrent; but for many this might become a secondary consideration if the quality of the programme is worth the cost. In the context of the current study, a significant number of participants believed that provision of a range of scholarships for candidates can motivate talented candidates demotivated with limited prospects for art graduates. A serious policy decision to foster art education and patronage to help graduates with employment options can, arguably, attract more talented youngsters into art education and can also address the gender imbalance.

Employability does not emerge as a grave concern per se. However, it could be the average starting pay scale, limited provision of established employers, the uncertainty of available freelancing options, and limitations of international level employability for free lancers could be off-putting factors. It can be argued that strengthening communication design and architecture programmes would prove useful for art institutes in general both in terms of employment options and the institute's academic standing and credibility. One interesting factor that surfaced in the research is the role of non-conventional sector that are not perceived as regular employers; they not only offer options that are not exploited usually but also hint at the need of innovation and creativity in exploring employment options that have not been tapped as yet.

The cause of art education can only be served satisfactorily if the option is available to aspirants irrespective of their financial standing. Reducing art as occupational choice to a select few is giving in to the flawed notion that creative expression is only with the affluent. Hence, policymakers, institutes and the state should foster art and visual creativity in the country. The curriculum needs to be aligned with the academic advances as well as available employment options. Moreover, academia-industry linkage can be strengthened for non-traditional solutions, and options for funding. However, any such collaboration should be spearheaded by institutes, academics, and policy makers taking industrial patrons on board without any compromise of quality of curriculum and pro-

grammes. The torchbearers of the cause of art education should also encourage innovation and imbed entrepreneurial culture to benefit students with an inclination to launch their startups, however small the scale that might be.

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