

## ***Expedition Theory: Bridging Teaching and Learning for Aesthetic Development***

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### **Abstract**

This paper is gleaned from years of learning through various styles and limited experience as a design educator. A myth was broken in an effort to 'educate design students'. 'Teaching' and 'Learning' are not equal experiences as both are driven by entirely different motivations. In spite of a teacher's good intentions to inspire students to learn, a chasm lies unattended. Plato's Allegory of the Cave, illustrates the pains of learning first hand versus mere teaching or instructing. Within formal conventions of curriculum, semester, contact hours, teaching and learning for employability etc, Teaching is governed by fixed time, lesson plans and learning outcomes. Push and Pull strategies tend to be used to 'enforce learning'. The paper, however questions this approach with an intention to relook at Teaching and Learning for this day and age. Why not shift focus away from Teaching towards Learning? Why not go beyond instruction or sharing of past accumulated knowledge? What if learning could become a joint expedition opening out learners to new and present knowledge with or without the teacher? What is the essence of aesthetics required to be learned? Must aesthetics be taught as a subject with a heavy theoretical foundation? What could change if aesthetics became an act, practice and habit of simple observation, appreciation, and creation in response to the former. Finally, can expedition theory be used to nurture aesthetics as an essential trait for growth and development? The theory also explores an evolved form of learning, that is 'Learning by Teaching'.

*Keywords:* Teaching, Learning, Aesthetic development, Expedition Theory

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## **Introduction**

And the year began and ended in a flash,  
A flurry of emotions rolling and tumbling past.  
Like a paper boat that started to sail.  
In the vast ocean with surging tides of myriad waves.  
Never thought it would find a shore,  
Never thought it could see places.  
Never thought it could touch souls,  
And be touched and be blessed and blessed,  
And grateful to be still afloat.  
Is it time to rest? Who knows?  
Where to this voyage might lead next?

Conventionally, there is an explicit distinction between a teacher and a learner. But, profundity of education can blur teaching and learning, especially when a new teacher is in question. As a young design educator, my first year of teaching, culminated into a sublime experience that could only find expression in poetry. This journey where intellect and emotion went hand in hand was not only aesthetically impressive but went beyond being merely personal. My unfamiliarity with 'formal teaching', put me at par with my learners, I was learning to 'teach'. Hence to me, this endeavor was like any other learning experience. In due course, my learning seemed to compound in pace and scale, but not without overcoming a fair share of challenges.

## **Challenges of a Newcomer**

.... Because 'to teach' was no child's play!  
Or so one thought. May be it was.  
Oh No! Not that trivial or that small.  
But truth there was something in there,  
Either in the child or the play.

As a beginner 'teacher', my journey was no less than a heady roller coaster ride with whirling highs and staggering lows. I would turn towards experienced colleagues for guidance and be surprised to hear them share similar woes. Firstly, meeting predetermined expectations of the formal system that worked along certified standards, pulled apart my targets from that of my students. Attendance, Submissions, Marks and Feedback seemed to maneuver learning to be an end rather than a lifelong process.

Secondly, reconciliation of a significant gap between my reality and that of the 17-21 something students. Could this be generation gap? Hard to believe, but indeed there was a disconnect or just plain difference in the methods, techniques and motivations to learn for me and my students. Striking and sustaining the equation to keep students inspired all along the learning process, was no easy.

Thirdly, the early realization of an ironic lacuna in design 'schools' that overlook 'deschooling' (Illich, 1971), especially when most of their students come from conventional K-12 school set-ups, be it urban, semi-urban or rural. Rewiring them to appreciate, imbibe and embrace a collaborative, creative and aesthetic outlook is

essential but time consuming in early stage learning. Inability to see the big picture, was a constant challenge, particularly due to compartmental learning (classes, cohorts, subjects, modules etc.). Adding to that is the system that lauds and rewards individual excellence rather than that of the group.

Fourthly, limited time always presents the dilemma of quantity versus quality of content. Where is the time or opportunity for early stage design students to sense purpose in the society they live in and feel responsible towards their own learning? Walking along this tumultuous path, my only motto was to remember that the learner is at the heart of the learning process. I also chose to relook at my own experience as a learner.

### Vision and Purpose

This paper is a reflection of my lifelong learning and, brief but exciting, teaching-cum-learning practice. It culls some of my insights about formal design education and the need to bridge gaps in teaching and learning. If learning takes supremacy as a lifelong mission, then as joint expeditions, barriers between teaching and learning could be erased. This expeditionary approach can be useful to nurture an aesthetic acumen in students, facilitating intrinsic growth for them and their teachers. Teaching has immensely enhanced my learning. Likewise, students too can 'learn by teaching' (Wikipedia, 2014), and empower a society that falsely believes that 'aesthetics is only for artists'. (Owens, 2013), Could they feel valuable as they spread the message of an aesthetic life, playing agents of change for the present and future? This is an opportunity for students, educators, thinkers, lifelong learners and leaders to contribute and relook at education, which is believed to be crucial for a 21<sup>st</sup> century hyper-linked learning society.

### Understanding Teaching and Learning

Before embarking on a voyage a seasoned explorer always prepares well. Similarly, beginning with the context of systematized education for employment<sup>1</sup> guides this journey of understanding the true purpose of teaching and learning (Fig.1). Formal education brings forth many generic imageries (Fig. 2). The general constituents of the experience are: a teacher/ instructor, student/s, a learning space, tools for teaching and learning, subject or topic to learn, lesson plan/ instructions, work that tests understanding and application of the former and finally a feedback system to assess and progress or graduate.



Fig.1. Education for Employment?; Fig.2. Formal Education Word Cloud

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/thespirtscience/> photos; accessed: 08.11.2014

Formal education also depends on administration, infrastructure and resource management to enable its smooth functioning. They are critical to the learning process such as in the design of the learning space, teacher-student ratio, time tables/ academic calendars, incentives/ opportunities for teachers' development, monitoring systems for teachers, students and parents etc. These issues are relevant but beyond the scope of this paper.

### Evolving Teacher-Student DNA's

Formal education rests on its two key stakeholders-students and teachers. Fig. 3. traces the evolution of the two groups with changing contexts. Well past into the Information Technology Age, we face many redundancies in the formal education system including 'the teacher as an instructor'. The purpose of learning is changing from employability to the pursuit of lifelong fulfillment, from survivalist pragmatism to existentialist idealism. 'Learning to be' instead of 'learning to become' (Faure, et. al., 1972). Does this endanger formalized institutional learning? What is missing?

When ADULTS Taught In The WILD	When TEACHERS Taught In HERMITAGES	When TEACHERS Taught In INSTITUTIONS	When EVERYONE & EVERYTHING Is Teaching & Learning
GAURDIANS/ PARENTS. OLDER/ EXPERIENCED. SOLE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE-GIVERS TAUGHT THROUGH LIVE HUNTING SESSIONS	GUARDIAN-LIKE, WISER/ EXPERIENCED. SOLE COMMUNITY'S SPECIALISED KNOWLEDGE GIVER. PREACHED, CONVERSED, SET TESTS. COMMANDED FEES IN RETURN.	STRANGER NOT GUARDIAN, YOUNG + OLD; VARIED EXPERIENCE. ONE IN MANY SPECIALISED KNOWLEDGE GIVER THROUGH LESSONS, LECTURES, TEXTBOOKS, ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS ETC.	STRANGER OR GUARDIAN, LIVING OR NOT, NO AGE OR EXPERIENCE LIMIT; GENERIC + MULTI SPECIALISED, MULTIPLE SOURCES, CHANNELS, METHODS OF KNOWLEDGE GIVING.
EAGER, ONLY OPTION TO LEARN FOR SURVIVAL. HIGH FEAR OF FAILURE, LIFE-THREATENING. PHYSICAL TRAINING AND MENTAL CORDINATION OF HIGH PRIORITY.	DECLINE IN EAGERNESS. LEARNING FOR STATUS, LESS DANGER PRONE. LARGELY MENTAL TRAINING MORE IMPORTANT THAN PHYSICAL TRAINING. FEAR OF FAILURE NIL/ LOW.	INTERST NOT IMPORTANT. LEARNING FOR STATUS, IN SAFE ENVIRONMENT. HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON MENTAL SKILLS. HIGH FEAR OF FAILURE AND PENALTY.	SELF INITIATION, EAGERNESS VERY IMPORTANT. PERSONALISED ENVIRONMENT. LEARNING FOR EMPLOYMENT BUT ALSO TO ENJOY. LOW TO MEDIUM FEAR OF FAILURE.
<b>LEARNING APPROACH</b>			
INFORMALSURVIVAL CENTRIC LEARNING. NOT LIESURELY, TIME-BOUND (ADOLESCENCE). LEARNING FROM NATURE, GENERIC KNOWLEDGE.	FORMAL, SURVIVAL + INTELLECT CENTRIC KNOWLEDGE. PARTLY LIESURELY BUT TIME-BOUND (ADOLESCENCE). LEARNING FROM NATURE AND STORIES.	HIGHLY FORMAL, KNOWHOW BASED LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOOD. TIME-BOUND (ADULTHOOD) LEARNING FROM BOOKS/ CLASSES CREDITED BY BOARDS.	FORMAL, INFORMAL + NON-FORMAL. INTELLECT+ KNOWHOW + SKILL BASED. TIME-BOUND IN DURATION BUT FLEXIBLE, NO AGE LIMIT OR NUMBER OF REPETITION.

Fig.3. Teacher-Student DNA's Evolution

### Non-Formal Education

Formal education has received much flak from many a thinker, educator and leader for being rigid and non-learner-centric. In India, it was especially condemned for its colonial roots that degenerated the Indian spirit in her citizens. J. Krishnamurthy, The Mother, Sri Aurobindo, Carl Rogers, Kurt Hahn, Ivan Illich, Sir Ken Robinson, Alan Watts etc. have elicited in various instances how modern education impoverished an individual's very soul. Instead it only bred weak citizens and disharmonious nations. Although formal standardized mass education has many drawbacks, it is difficult to adopt the extreme opposite, Informal Learning. It may be the best way we learn but due to its unstructured and unintentional nature much time and resources get mismanaged. Many alternative models and ideologies were conceived based on the constructivist theories by the likes of J. Dewey, J. Piaget, L.Vygotsky and M.



Montessori. They attempted to blend intentional, time-bound and infrastructure based formal and the incidental or accidental and flexible, informal learning model. This blended form was termed 'Non-formal' education (Fig.4). Rogers, A., (2005), defined it as: "Any form of learning conducted outside of a formal organization."

It is based on the idea of knowledge construction by way of observation, discovery, first hand or immediate experience, peer interaction, collaboration etc. It is also the most common approach used in adult education. Carl Rogers, a proponent of student-centric independent learning, extensively published on how formal systems must accommodate the learner's needs. In his book, *Freedom to Learn*, he identified some essential traits for a learner, (General Teaching Council for England, 2008): "The only person who is educated is the person who has learned how to learn; the person who has learned how to adapt and change".

Education is about learning to be informed, independent, creative, flexible, but what must education really address? Is it only limited to training work forces and empowering economies?

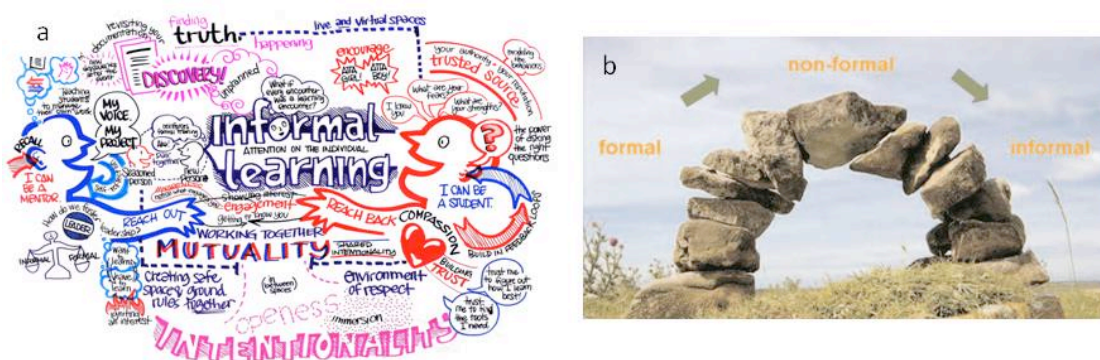


Fig.4. Non-Formal Learning: a) (Agerback, 2012), Intentional Informal Learning; b) (Shephard, 2006), Bridging Formal and Informal Learning

### Learning Beyond Knowledge

Plato's Republic has been an inspiration to many educators. The Allegory of Cave shown in Fig.4a<sup>2</sup>, illustrates why the imprisoned people (learners) must take initiative to leave their protective caves (incomplete knowledge and ignorance), to independently explore (sun lit exit) the outside world and compare realities (shadows vs. real trees) so they may return with the truth or wisdom (sun). Plato knew to live well we need strong harmonious nations, where every citizen learns and lives with humanitarian values. According to him 'character building', is education's most important function (Stetson, 1941). Sound judgement apart, confidence, camaraderie, leadership, trust, sensitivity, empathy, compassion, love, coping with negativity, anxiety, stress, valuing health etc. are mark of an impressive, desirable and strong character to live a meaningful life (Fig.6). Formal education could offer students these

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Author, <http://blackflagtheology.com/tag/allegory-of-the-cave>, accessed: 28.12.2014

personality traits much earlier in their lives. Education in its foremost stage must be an understanding of 'self' (mind, body and heart). But one must also extend this learning to 'others' in our immediate surroundings and gradually outwards to the larger 'environment' (planet/ nature) as shown in Fig. 5(b, c, d, e).



Fig.5a. Allegory of Cave; Fig. 4.b,c,d,e. Self, Other & Environment; 2<sup>nd</sup> Year student's blog assignment on art and film interpretation; 1<sup>st</sup> Year design: Dialogues for stationery holder for fellow student; 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Communication Theory: Journal from visit to National Science Centre, Delhi.

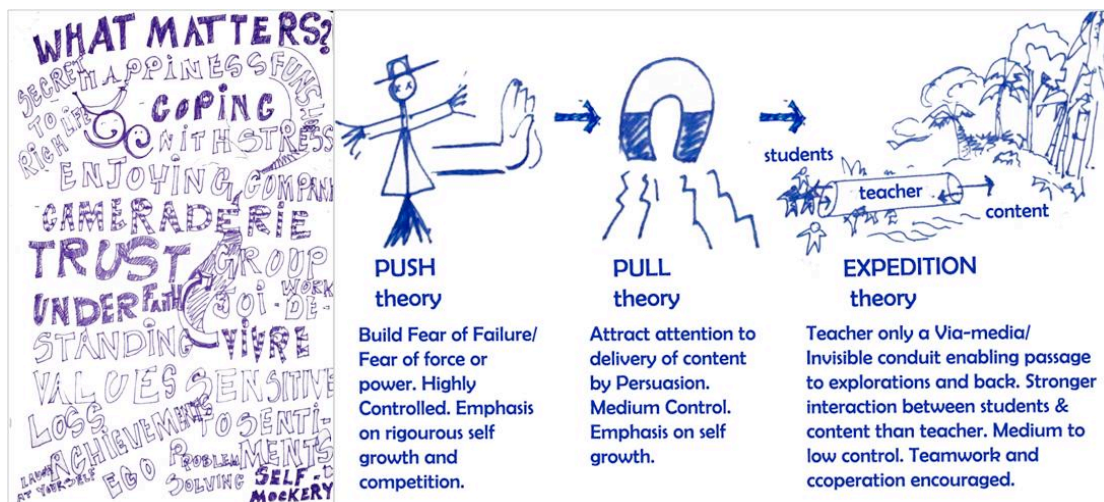


Fig.6. What to learn? Fig. 7. Teaching Strategies: Push, Pull, Expedition theories.

Dr. Kurt Hahn, founder of the Outward Bound Trust, was inspired by the saying, 'Plus est en vous', meaning there is more in you than you think. He believed in tapping the potential of youth who were wasting away under the influence of social evils and getting disinterested with conventional schooling. In a public address, he shared his vision to have self motivated young learners. For the first time he compared learning to expeditions, inspired by marine rescue missions. Dr., Hahn, K., (1960), said:

"There are three ways of trying to win the young. There is persuasion, there is compulsion and there is attraction...“You are needed.” That appeal hardly ever fails...young of today respond better to the service. If learning is viewed as an expedition then it promises much more than the originally set goals."

His words very aptly capture the teacher-instructor's strategies of Push and Pull (See Fig.7.), and how it can move towards Expedition theory discussed in the following section.

### **Expedition Theory**

An expedition is a journey taken to fulfill a deep sense of inquiry and curiosity. It could be a trip to the wilderness or a ride to the outer space or even a little experiment in your garage or backyard. Every expedition is directed by a guide/ coach/ interpreter along with an expedition crew. There are no tourists or passengers here, but only avid explorers who perform remarkable feats of discovery with immaculate teamwork. In the same sense, learning involves exploring the unknown. When a group of curious learners collaboratively participate in unique experiences, where serendipity can guide their discoveries and interpretations, we have a 'Learning Expedition'!



Fig.8. Expedition: Curiosity & Explorations in Teams

### **Expeditionary Learning**

Dr., Hahn wanted young people to be driven by courage, compassion and love in their learning expeditions. When he started the school, Outward Bound, due importance was given to fitness training, expeditions, projects, and rescue services to ensure the young can test and build their character. He once mentioned in an address to the Outward Bound Trust, (Dr., Hahn,1960):

“Experience has taught us that expeditions can greatly contribute towards building strength of character...it is necessary for a youth to experience events which “reveal the inner worth of the man: the edge of his temper; the fibre of his stuff; the



quality of his resistance, the secret truth of his pretences, not only to himself but to others.”

Born out of Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound's values and beliefs, is a school reformation model for middle and high schools known as Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB). (Thornton Creek, Seattle Public School, 2010). ELOB is based on 10 design principles namely:

- i) the primacy of self discovery; ii) the having of wonderful ideas; iii) the responsibility for learning; iv) empathy and caring; v) success and failure; vi) collaboration and competition; vii) diversity and inclusion; viii) the natural world; ix) solitude and reflection; x) service and compassion.

ELOB ensures the expedition team of teachers and students learn through interdisciplinary project-based experiences created by the teachers. Teachers facilitate by challenging students to think deeply, question, research and evaluate their own work as well as their peers'. Students are also encouraged to record their findings and reflections on the experience. ELOB acknowledges learning as a process and allows time for gradual improvements in drafts or stages, till the learners feel a sense of accomplishment. The Thornton Creek public school in Seattle, USA, successfully tried this model in their visual and performing arts program (Thornton Creek, Seattle Public School, 2010).

Austin's Butterfly is an art project for a 1<sup>st</sup> grader named Austin (Expeditionary Learning Schools, 2014). Austin's challenge is to recreate an as realistic drawing of a butterfly based on a reference photograph. Fig. 9. shows how the young boy was able to improve his work vastly from the very first doodle. This activity helped Austin and his peers to understand the value of astute observation, building the right vocabulary and honest opinions and critiques in order to produce high quality work. ELOB as an experience is flexible, disrupting the concept of learning in cohorts or batches based on age groups. Expeditionary learning is a unique way to bring students together for a common cause and collaboratively synthesize solutions and prototypes.

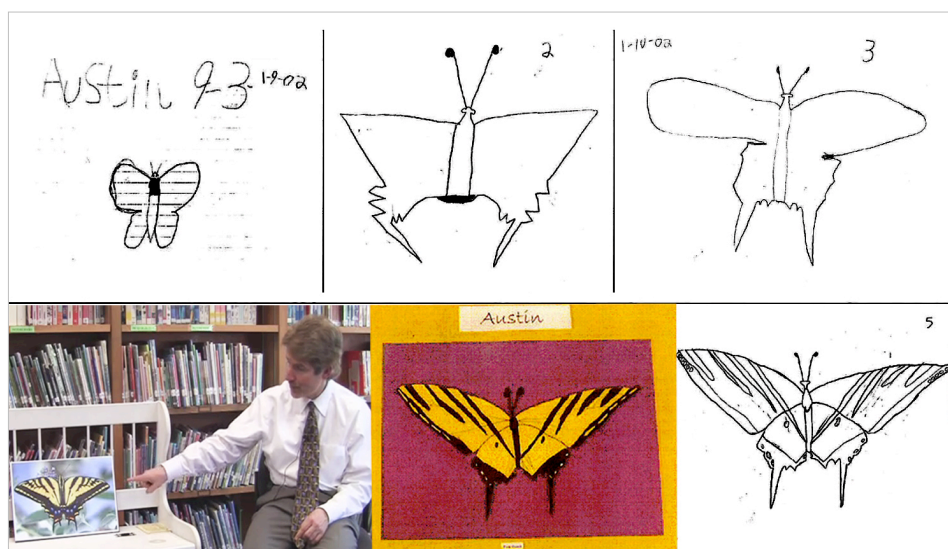


Fig.9. Austin's Butterfly Project

## Reflecting on Key Learning for Teaching

Kindergarten: Picking snails from the classroom backyard, 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Learning Carnatic classical music with my sister, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Making a simple recoil model with my father, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sound and light show during a trip to Purana Quila (New Delhi), High School: Making inorganic dye with fellow student in the lab, 1<sup>st</sup> Year Architecture: Measured drawing group work during trip to Sikandra (Uttar Pradesh), 1<sup>st</sup> employment's outbound induction training: Camping at Mukteshwar (Uttarakhand), and interacting with a local family, Master of Design batch trip to Kumbakonam (Tamil Nadu), Conducting workshops in school and college. (Fig.10, 11). Looking back, these were some episodes etched in my memory for life. These experiences were a form of Non-formal learning. Most of these learning sessions were situated outside the conventional classroom and often undertaken in groups.

These experiences were both fun and challenging, for they affected my entire 'self' as I actively engaged with 'others' in a variety of 'environments'. My peers and I had to explore, observe, question, be curious, brave, open-minded, persevere, share and thus jointly build our knowledge. Our explorations and the situations we encountered did all the teaching for us. In retrospect these experiences were little expeditions facilitated by a guide, mentor, coach or teacher/s. While directing the group of learners these facilitators also collaborated and learned with us. These expeditions had an enormous influence to kindle and awaken an important life skill in me, the aesthetic acumen. This was worth carrying forward as an approach in my own teaching methods.



Fig.10. Examples of Learning from Past Experiences: a) Outbound Training, Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand; b) Trip to Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu & c) 2<sup>nd</sup> year Architecture water colour class to Dilli Haat, New Delhi

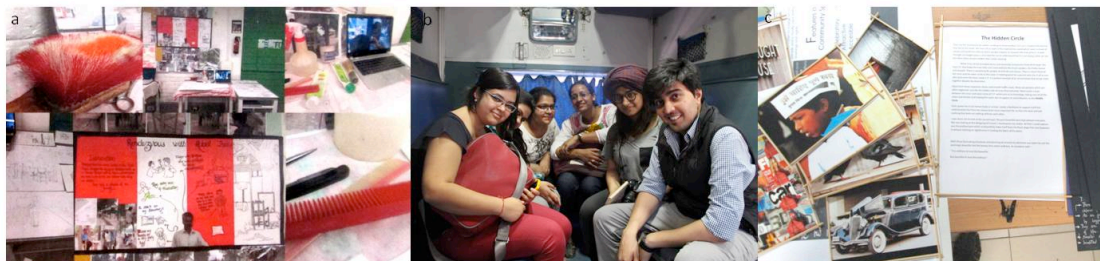


Fig.11. Examples of Teaching: a) 1<sup>st</sup> year Design: Group environment study of a roadside barber; b) 2<sup>nd</sup> year Information Theory: Visit to Old Delhi Railway Station & c) 2<sup>nd</sup> year Architecture Outdoor photography at Connaught Circle

## Defining Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the idea of beauty and taste (Munro, 2012). While it extends across our entire sensory perception of the world, in popular understanding it is directly linked to visual arts. Aesthetics is rooted in culture and traditions, as there are treatises, tenets and principles proclaiming what is beautiful and ugly (Natya Shastra, Nava Rasa, Golden/ Divine Proportions etc.). It is also dictated by socio-politico-economic trends and practices. Often many cultures tend to elevate an enjoyable experience with honest beauty to truth and divinity. This sanskrit verse, 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram', tersely translates to goodness or divinity being a manifestation of truth and together they express beauty that elicits a beautiful positive response of bliss, joy and adoration. On the contrary, aesthetics can also be very individualistic, personal and subjective. What appears to be beautiful or pleasurable to one may be distasteful or even disgusting to another, irrespective of cultures and origins. Aesthetics, in a direct way, is a subtle yet simple art of appreciation, of any form of creation that intrinsically touches an individual. It involves close observation and deep reflection of emotional/intellectual perceptions to interpret and critically analyze the object in view.



Fig.12. Aesthetic Canons: a) Indian Folk Dance Drama; b) Changing Standards of Feminine Beauty: From John Berger's Film, Ways of Seeing; c) Golden Ratio<sup>3</sup>

## Aesthetic Acumen

What is an aesthetic acumen? Why do we need it for development? How can this be nurtured? Study of aesthetics can thus enhance one's creative and analytical faculties. Aesthetic acumen lets us acknowledge, embrace and channelize our feelings and thoughts into heartfelt creative expression, either through music, art, film, writing, acting or performance, which further resonates beauty. Thus enabling beautiful and creative conversations. A well developed aesthetic acumen is to identify beauty in every experience.

<sup>3</sup> <http://speckyboy.com/2012/06/06/speed-consistency-harmony-creativity-certainty-with-the-golden-grid>, accessed: 08.11.2014





Fig.13. Richard Harsh on Aesthetic Experience: Looking for Beauty in 4 seconds

A former high school art teacher from California, Richard Harsh (Fig. 13), trains students to appreciate beauty and verbally 'capture' an everyday activity as an aesthetic experience, such as pouring cream into a cup of coffee (Teaching Aesthetic Experience, YouTube, 2014). Richard Harsh wanted to sensitize and empower his students who came from disadvantaged socio-economic communities. He believed aesthetics offered them the hope and positivity to choose a better life. In an emotional moment Richard shared what his students felt about his art lessons and what art's true purpose was:

"Thank you for the art history classes...but the thing you taught me the most is how to love myself, that I am a person that's worthwhile and I can do anything in this world if I wanted to...And that's what the gift of art is...to open your eyes not only to the world but to your own potential, which is just infinite."

### **Aesthetic Development as Learning Expeditions**

Aesthetic acumen begins with understanding one self and one's perceptions to the outside world or the object in view. Upon further exploration one uncovers unexpected connections in cultures and ideologies opening up minds to embrace diversity. An aesthetic acumen constantly shifts perspectives from 'Self' to 'Others' to the larger 'Environment', a very important skill set for any human especially an early stage design student. Aesthetic acumen, not only opens our minds but also our hearts to unbiased appreciation, unleashing a sense of wonder in discovering myriad interconnections in nature. The world becomes one harmonious whole, giving birth to empathy and compassion to love and care for all, the way we would for ourselves.

Aesthetic education is imperative to overall development of every individual and thus the collective society. (Pandit, M.P., 2009), In his book, *The National Value of Art*, Sri Aurobindo laments at the loss suffered by the Indian system, for ignoring the aesthetic development of every human. This included: imagination, sensitivity to fine arts like music, perceiving beauty in nature by understanding the intrinsic soul values, harmony etc. This understanding was reflected into my teaching modules such that learning became an expedition for self discovery. The following are exemplars of some of the play/ fun based learning activities I created and participated in with my students and colleagues as a teacher-facilitator in formal design schools.



Fig.14. Funshop: Non-formal creative workshops; Fig 15. Arts project from natureobservation to wood cut prints; Fig 16. a) Multiple interpretations of one idea (Wheel); b) Found typefaces from everyday objects (different languages); c) Music Interpretation in Colour and Black and White/ Grey; Fig 17. Expedition culminating as exhibitions/ film screening and students' reflections



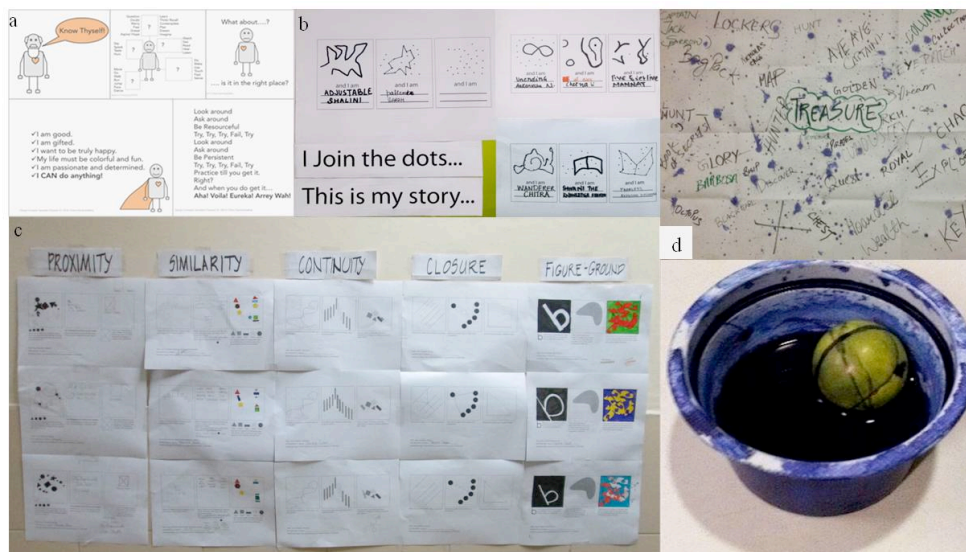


Fig.18a, b, c, d. Cognitive Activities: Know thyself, Interactive Session on Self Awareness and Reflection; Join the dots: Culmination of Module on Storytelling; Learning Gestalt through Visual Puzzles; and Ball-storming: Tangible Brainstorming on 'Treasure', theme for Storytelling Module.

My aim was to build their confidence, know their own self worth and express themselves unabashedly. We would usually displayed the work to appreciate, compare and find similarities. We are easily wired to spot differences, but it takes a close look to find similarities. This works wonders in bonding with complete strangers. I have seen friendships getting built as classmates loved to spend time with like minded learners as they collaborated for projects.

Reflections and feedback from most students, showed that these activities were well received as both a form of relaxation and enjoyable learning of the subject in spite of inherent challenges to excel. Indirect learning was also in knowing about each other. These expeditions were intended to culminate into significant events such as final exhibitions, shows or screening that was opened to everyone in college. This reinforced a sense of accomplishment in students as they reflected on all their initial struggles that made it possible. The learners group also displayed a collective pride for their joint efforts, thus building an implicit bond among peers.

### Learning by Teaching

Teaching has been an aesthetic learning experience for me. It not only enhanced my knowledge of the subject but also let me grow by enhancing my character to be more positive and sensitive to emotions. (General Teaching Council for England, 2008), Carl Rogers quoted in his book, Freedom to Learn: "The one who does the talking, does the learning".

I believed that 'Learning-by-Teaching begets Learning'. I was motivated to let my students experience this type of growth as teachers of their own learner's group. Further reading led me to Jean-Pol Martin, a language teacher who established the method of 'Lernen durch Lehren' (Learning by Teaching) wherein students learn by

teaching their peers (Wikipedia, 2014). The Mother's view on teaching is that it is a divine grace bestowed upon an individual as a unique opportunity for self development. She believed the role and character of a teacher was integral to learning. In an essay titled A Good Teacher, she has written about the qualities of a good teacher (The Mother, 2009):

"One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must be a great yogi...One must have a perfect attitude to be able to exact a perfect attitude from the students."

While Teaching offers many lessons for the teacher in terms of conduct and interpersonal relationships, my concern was to know how it affected true learning. Learning is typically individualistic with a focus on self improvement. On the other hand, Teaching is a process that takes learning beyond 'self' to 'others' in an as explicable way as possible. Thus teaching is a far more social and expansive experience. When students teach they connect better by transcending formal barriers in trends, language and hierarchy, conventionally associated with a teacher. This is where, I discovered a caveat in teaching by learners.



Fig.19 a, b. Learning by Teaching in Outdoor and Classroom Environments: School students peer teaching in a Museum of Arts; 3rd Year Product design students teaching assigned weekly design concepts in Class.

I implemented micro teaching with a smaller batch of students (9 Nos.) (Fig.19 b). There was an inherent risk of casualness, inaccuracy and misrepresentations. Often 21<sup>st</sup> century learners were prone to limited but popular resources on the internet instead of using the vast reserves of a library. In such a scenario, teachers should appropriately intervene. They could question or guide learners to seriously look for varied and credible sources of information. Learners must be trusted with the responsibility of sharing ethical and accurate information. They must also be encouraged to freely reveal limits in their knowledge. Thus inviting peer learners and teachers to fill in their gaps. This motivates inquiries that can be followed up by students taking the initiative to go deeper into the subject. Learning by teaching can be seen as a more engaging way to learn, as it propagates learning of a subject.

## Conclusion

As a hopeful young design educator, I was always a learner at first, but I was consumed in tackling challenges within the formal education system. My initial reaction was only outward looking and filled with disappointment and acrimony. I was impatient with inefficiencies in teaching within the system. I wanted to end

methods that were irrelevant for current times and change the system by weeding out parts that dehumanized learning. But with time, I realized, the change I wanted to see had to start from me and emerged from looking inwards. Indeed, this was an eye-opener, as I discovered the solution was in the change in attitude.

### **Role of Expeditions**

Expeditionary learning played an important role in this change of attitudes. I was able to embrace uncomfortable feelings/situations and uncertainties that led me towards wisdom which I wanted to sow as seeds in the society at large. I noticed, learning expeditions, facilitated both the education of the mind and skills and that of the heart and spirit. Through a variety of challenges whether emotional, intellectual or even spiritual, learners emerged with Aha! moments and became more humble and compassionate. In the end, a sense of accomplishment of goals, developed learners' personalities with more confidence, creativity, team and leadership skills. Learning expedition is a journey that can have lasting impressions for life as learners mature in sensitivities and sensibilities. This is the only first hand route to gaining and retaining wisdom because instructions can only offer forgettable information. Wakefulness and mindfulness along with conscious reflection bring about this change in attitudes.



Fig 20. Expeditionary Learning: Bridging Gaps and Building Relationships

### **Need Versus Want to Learn**

In expeditions, learners willingly participate with a 'want to learn' instead of the compulsion of a 'need to learn'. Learners take active ownership in their quest for knowledge, wisdom, truth and beauty. 'Learning by Teaching' experiences can boost their self-confidence and make them realize their self worth. Through this they might even enlighten a society to believe that *'aesthetics is not only for artists'*. In a technologically wired planet with multiple learning communities, learning expeditions can make students cooperate to harness the power of teams and networks to innovate design solutions for various global issues. Teachers, the Education System and the



Community must support and treat them as mature and responsible young adults. They must trust their learners' abilities to see their own transformation.

### Role of Teachers in Expeditionary Learning

The teacher as just an instructor is soon becoming redundant. Teaching ought to shift away from mere systemic compliance to advanced learner-content interaction. The old Push and Pull approach must move towards facilitation, mentoring or coaching. Teachers should open the world of questions to learners. Robert Bainbridge in his essay, *A New Type of Teacher*, aptly quotes (Bainbridge, R., 2009):

"With the teacher's help students must become questing spirits going beyond the boundaries of static comfort and status quo....into larger life of adventurous transmutation....'from Wonder unto Wonder existence opens'."

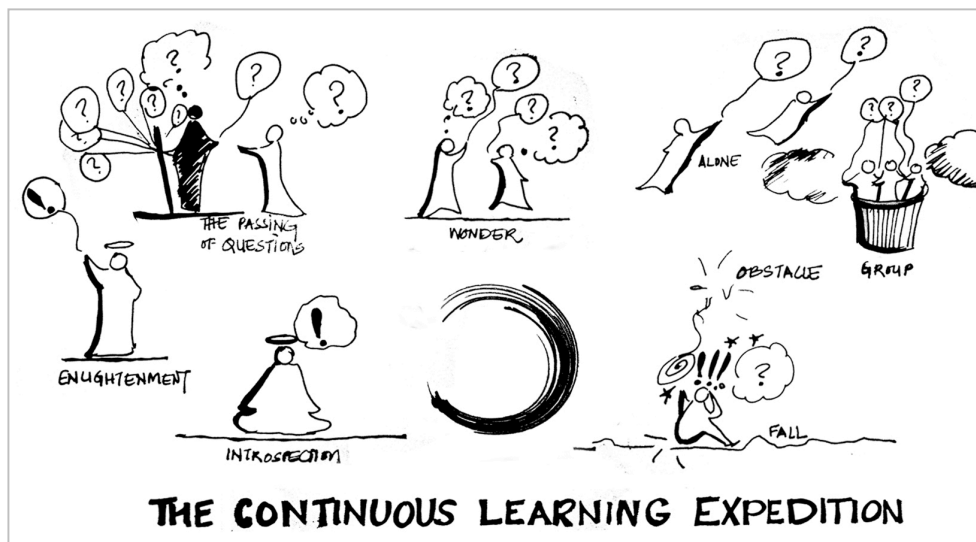


Fig 21. Expeditionary Learning Cycle

In Learning expeditions, teachers also chart unfamiliar courses to bring out the best in themselves. That is how they can inspire and prepare students to deal with life's events. Teachers should champion this cause in spite of systemic limitations. Expeditions thus truly bridge gaps between the learner and the teacher because, teachers transform into learners, experiencing their own adventures and moments of truth and wisdom. Teachers step down from pedestals to mingle with students. This makes learning far less intimidating. Instead, it is now more collaborative, full of surprises and thus enjoyable.

Teachers around the world, have great power. We can shape just, fair and compassionate nations by nurturing their future citizens as we lead by example. Teaching brings out the best in us to achieve the best in our students. So they can appreciate and learn the value of thinking, feeling and acting with goodness. Robert Bainbridge writes in, *A New Type of Teacher* (Bainbridge, R., 2009): " A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."



Fig.22. Teacher-Student Bonds Beyond Classroom Learning

To impact students in a powerful and positive way, a teacher must have an 'integral personality' (Jayaswal, S.R., 2009). This involves development of four aspects of self: *Psychic* for understanding one's inner psychological make-up; *Mental* for intellect and rationale to be calm; *Vital*, to balance emotions and maintain a positive attitude; and finally *Physical* to hone the body as a supple and strong instrument for service. When the *Psychic*, *Mental*, *Vital* and *Physical* aspects are well developed four major attributes are born: *Love*, *Knowledge*, *Power* and *Beauty* respectively. These in turn are manifestations of Truth and become an inherent part of the teacher's 'integral personality' inspiring and serving students as a powerful role model.

### Aesthetics for Personal and Professional Life



Fig. 23. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: World is One Family

Aesthetics must be learned in early years of education first for personal and later for professional growth. But, aesthetics cannot be truly learned from books, rules and laws. Instead it is the first hand study of appreciating and extracting the essence by honestly and deeply looking beyond physical attributes. This demands great practice and devotion, which is why students need a teacher's guidance, to discard biases, celebrate diversity and view the world as one whole family. As a life skill, they can learn to balance emotions by embracing and channelizing them through creative expressions that further creates more truth and beauty. Thus aesthetic acumen develops youth to act as better global citizens.

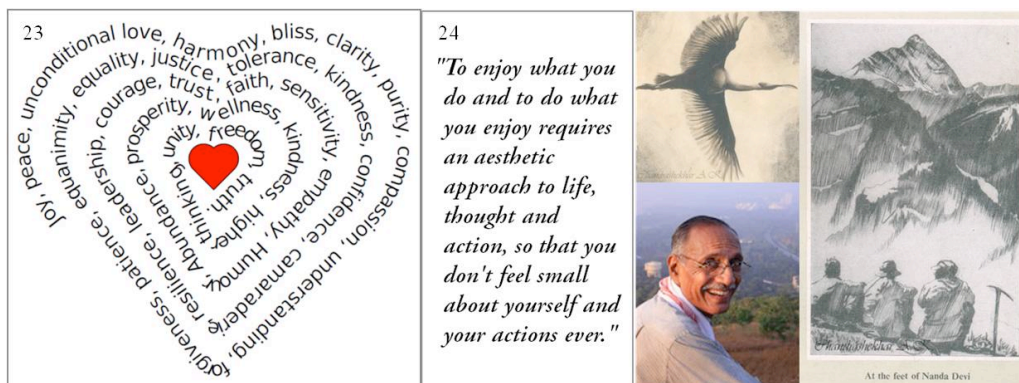


Fig. 24. Life is Love;

Fig.25. Chandrashekhar AK, (a self taught artist, retired finance professional, nature lover, mountaineer, life-long learner, friend, guide, mentor and my father), on aesthetic approach in work/ leisure for a meaningful and enjoyable life.

To grow as a harmonious global communion we should all teach one another this important life lesson-The Concept of Love. Prolific teacher of love, Leo Buscaglia, ardently preached in his famous lectures<sup>4</sup>, 'the study of Love is the study of Life-for Life is Love; Love is Life'. According to him a meaningful and full life needs: *Right Knowledge, Wisdom, Compassion, Gentleness and Understanding, Harmony, Creativity, Strength against Fear and Uncertainty, Peace, Joy, Humour, Love as a Continuous Guide to Higher Consciousness and Unity*. Shouldn't these be goals for our fast paced hyperlinked learning society?

### Can Formal Transform?

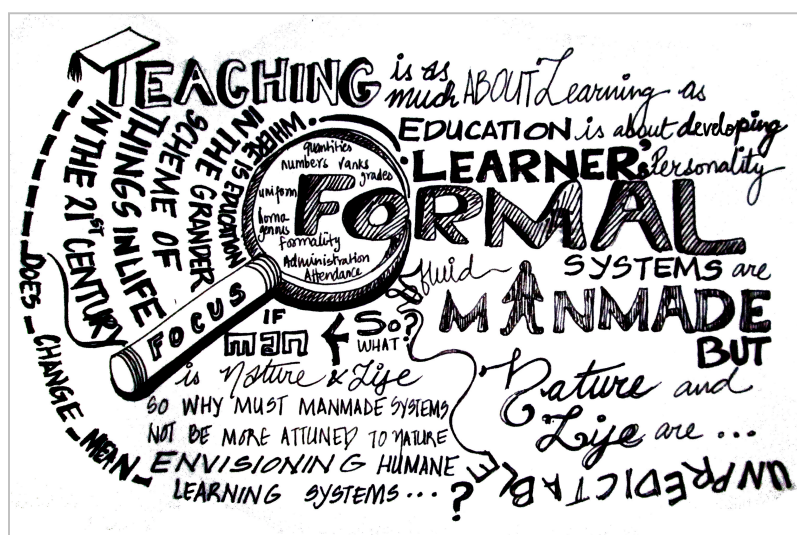


Fig. 26. Change Towards Humane Learning Systems

When central focus of education is not mere employability but lifelong fulfillment, shouldn't formal education direct such growth earlier in life rather than in collegiate levels? Shouldn't the system allow mixed group learning as against cohorts with

<sup>4</sup> *Speaking of Love*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lqZ5\\_czb80](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lqZ5_czb80), accessed: 01.04.2015

flexible timelines as opposed to semesters and fixed number of years. Unlike music, dance and sports where failing is inevitable and motivation to excel is an inherent precondition; our education system fails to encourage failures that engender an attitude of excellence instead of just passing. Finally, How would the education system change, if its core was to honour and reward love, empathy, camaraderie, cooperation, sharing, sense of humour, maturity and emotional intelligence? What would happen if the metrics and procedures are realigned towards what matters the most in life?

This brings me back to the change in attitude. Systems are ultimately made up of people, and a change in attitudes of these people can change systems at large. My final insight for future practice is that, we are all together students, who are endlessly learning in one School called Life.

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