IVSAA and KU: A Comparative Analysis of the Diversified Pedagogies, Structure of Art Education and External Factors Influencing Student Art Work

By

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Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture
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I would like to begin by thanking Allah for giving me the patience and consistency to write this dissertation. This dissertation would have been impossible without the immense support, guidance, and patience of my dissertation advisor, Ms Fatima Qureshi. If she had not tolerated my impatience and repeatedly encouraged me and told me I was doing alright, I would not have known what to do. I would like to thank her and give her complete credit for this entire dissertation. I would also like to thank Ms Aisha Darr for her presentations and classes which taught us how to structure our dissertation and conduct our research. And lastly, as my external help, I would like to thank Gemma Sharpe and Wahab Suri for taking out extra time for me when they did not have to and giving me constructive advice and criticism.
List of Abbreviations

IVSAA: Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

IVS: Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

KU: Karachi University

BFA: Bachelors in Fine Art
Abstract

Art and art education have a varying definition throughout the world and hence different art institutions are built on different pedagogies, structures and ideologies. Such art educational institutions nurture their students in the way they feel an artist should be and thus there is diversity in their work. The work produced by an artist is mostly a product of the factors and stimuli around them. These factors may include one’s educational institution, religious, financial and socio political elements surrounding them. This paper is an analysis of the diversifying work of art produced by the students of two degree awarding art institutions within Karachi and how the work of an artist is often prejudged by the art world.
Introduction:

‘Art education has always been perceived as a milieu that doesn't matter in mainstream society, rather frivolous perhaps, the goof around class. In this context it refers to the visual arts or perhaps that which supports the visual arts.’¹ ‘Art education today is the application of art interests and experiences to the wholesome development of maturing personalities.’² The art educator has accepted as his personal responsibility the logical and psychological development of those innate capacities for creative expression in all forms of art experience with which every individual is endowed’.³ 

Art institutions all over the world are built on certain art philosophies, structures and goals. They either hold traditional values, contemporary ideologies or maintain a balance between both. Their methods of nurturing the upcoming art community might vary but one common factor between these institutions is that their art education is not confined to the classrooms and courses they offer. Interaction between students, teachers, administration along with the society and visual knowledge is key to a complete art education.


³ Ibid.
There has been a certain evolution in the teaching methods of art institutions over time as the definition of the term ‘art’ constantly varies, as new art theories emerge. Being an art student myself, I have always felt a discrepancy in the kind of art work that is produced at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in comparison to other art colleges in Pakistan. The degree that we receive by the end of our education may be similar but our institutions are structured very differently.

The first section of my research paper talks about art education theory and the structure of art education institutions. I will further divide the art education in Pakistan into public and private systems and discuss their diversified pedagogies. Keeping government and private funding as key difference I will discuss how the socio-economic state of the country affects art education and causes discrepancies between and within these institutions.

The second part of my research paper will be a comparative analysis of the Visual Studies department at Karachi University (KU) (a state run institution) and Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) (a private institution), highlighting the similarities and differences between their structure, curriculum and facilities. By conducting interviews with the head of departments and teachers of these institutions, I will bring forward their opinion and perspective on what role the institution plays in nurturing its students and whether the social milieu impacts their art work.

The final part of my research paper concludes how the difference in the art work of the students of both the institutions could be the result of mentioned factors, such as social, political, financial and economical reasons. It also talks about how the subject
matter and form of expression of their work is mostly, if not always, a reflection of their personal experiences and individual exposure to society.
Literature Review

This chapter of my dissertation starts with the basic understanding of Fine Art and then takes on a slightly institutionalist approach as to how a work of art is perceived in the society and art world. It further talks about how that theory applies not only to a professional level but also to a young art student being nurtured at an educational institution. While giving a brief introduction on the emergence of art schools in Pakistan, I am further narrowing down my discussion and research to Karachi based degree awarding art institutions and the diversity observed in their structure, curriculum, student body and their work.

Bernard Bolzano explains his understanding of fine arts and of works of fine art, and he presents a classification of fine arts based on an ontological analysis of the works of fine art. For Bolzano, a fine art is primarily the human faculty of producing, by a free and intentional activity, beautiful objects whose beautiful attributes are the results that are intended and also effected (i.e. actually brought about) by this activity; and a work of fine art is an object produced by such an activity. This concept of a work of art seems too broad, however, in the context of teaching how to produce works of fine art. Bolzano therefore suggests further restrictions concerning the time taken for its production, its durability and its communicability.\(^4\)

In agreement to Bolanzo’s theory, work produced by a fine artist should not be evaluated or subjected on the amount of time he/she invested or the work’s acceptability in the society. A Fine artist’s work is the freest form of his/her expression. It is their attempt at self expression and communication, with themselves or others. Its authenticity or success should not be judged by its communicability with its audience but rather with the artist’s intentions behind the work itself.

But in the world we live in today, it is not so much about how genuine or pure a work of art is, but rather how the society responds to it. The response of the society is also a by-product of how the art fraternity feels about the work.

George Dickie, a professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois in Chicago, postulated a theory about the relationship between art and the audience meant to receive it. His theory set about to define what art actually is and the context in which it applies to society.  

He talks about how a work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public and an artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art. He explains the term ‘public’ as a set of people which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them and the artworld is the totality of all artworld systems. An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.

George Dickie’s theory, on the relationship between artwork and society, is not only present amongst the existing artists but also the upcoming ones. Art students often face the same dilemma within their educational institutions. Therefore the term ‘artworld’

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6 Ibid.
does not only comprise of artists and art collectors, it is a mixed concoction of many other members that come together and take decisions for artists. And hence, decide their future.

The art world is structured as an interdependent network of social-economic actors who cooperate--often contentiously or unknowingly--to enact and perpetuate the art world, while at the same time negotiating kinds and levels of cooperation in a mutually understood careerist and competitive context. They could include:

Art schools, colleges, and professional art teachers, artists, art historians and academic art theorists, art critics, art writers, art periodical publishers, magazine editors and professional production staff, book publishing industry for art books, monographs, museum exhibitions, art dealers and galleries, curators, museum directors, public and private art collection managers, art collectors, art patrons, donors, public art funders, private arts support foundations, both direct grants to artists and funding of art organizations (museums, non-profit spaces, university galleries, etc.) (Connected to general economy through invested endowments and private contributions), all staff levels in art funding organizations: public (local, state, and federal government) and private (foundations, corporate art funding), art consultants, art investment advisors.

An art educational institution is the starting point for, most if not all, artists and lays a preliminary foundation for their basic understanding of ‘art’. It is a place that plays a very vital role in the students work and future.

Consideration for broad social and psychological values of art experience necessitates possession of certain bodies of knowledge and control of skills capable of effectively influencing constructive experience through art expression. To gain knowledge and skills giving insight into creative art experience and its consequent effects upon the individual, the art educator applies himself to specialized studies dealing with wholesome personality growth and development and helpful or detrimental impacts of the social milieu. The training of the practicing artist takes other forms. The emphasis is on the development of native abilities and skills and the criteria of achievement is not upon the experience and its consequent psychological implications, but on the product of the experience. The emotional release and consequent stability evident in a classroom of painting students in the average art school is of small importance to the painting professor directing the class. What is important is the degree of mastery of the medium, the skilful application of technique in the literal or "expressive" interpretation of the model. It is the end product, the result of systematic training in the development of skills that determines the teaching ability of the instructor as well as the class status of the student.

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John Ruskin, (1819 –1900) an English art critic, social thinker, poet and artist, had an interesting take on ‘education’:

Educate, or govern, they are one and the same word. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. It is not teaching the youth of England the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers; and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery, and their literature to lust. It is, on the contrary, training them into the perfect exercise and kingly continence of their bodies and souls. It is painful, continual, and difficult work; to be done by kindness and by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise,—but above all—by example.9

The art educator plays a vital role in the nurturing of young art students and many a times have a certain amount of effect on the students work. This shall be further analyzed in the Findings and Discussions section.

When it comes to teaching fine art as an education, institutes all over the world structure their course in various ways. One of the commonly followed course outline is similar to that of The Ruskin School at Oxford University, named after John Ruskin, which structures its Bachelors in Fine Arts (BFA) programme to be a 3 year programme.

Students begin from the start to develop their studio work in discussion with the school’s lecturers, tutors and visiting staff. Work is regularly presented and discussed at group critiques involving staff and students from across the School. In addition, they attend taught practical classes in drawing and human anatomy as well as lectures, seminars and tutorials in art history. Experimentation is encouraged. All students are required to continue the study of art history and theory and to agree to submit extended essay title with their thesis. This essay is submitted at the end of the final year as part of the Final Examination. Students are expected to establish a strong bond between the interests of the essay and their studio studies.10


The reason I chose The Ruskin School as an example was because its curriculum and structure was similar to that of the art colleges in Pakistan despite the degree programme being a year shorter. Due to the limitations of my dissertation I am further narrowing down my research to the art schools located within Karachi. But it is still important to mention The National College of Arts (NCA) as it was the foremost proper degree awarding Art College. In Pakistan, the National College of Arts Lahore is one of the most established and important art institutions. Initially known as the Mayo School of Arts, this institution has existed for over a century, has produced some of the greatest Pakistani artists, and still continues to do so.

The NCA lay down a preliminary foundation for all the future art institutions in Pakistan, and slowly and gradually many art educational institutes started emerging.

One of the early art schools in Karachi was the one in Mehmoodabad started by Sheikh Ahmed after he had been divorced by Anna Molka, who stayed on in Lahore in the Fine Arts department of the Punjab University.\(^{11}\)

If one were to chalk up a list of art schools that still exist in Karachi, the names that immediately spring to mind are The Karachi School of Art, the Visual Arts Department of Karachi University, The Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. There are a few others listed here in abbreviated form like the Sadequain School, Alishah Art Valley, North City, Studio Arts, Pakistan Art Institute, Bhattai School, Mashkoor Art School, Vijdan School, Studio Arts, PACC and the VM Rangoonwala Centre where Hanif Shahzad holds classes twice a week. However, it is only the IVS and the Visual Arts department of Karachi University that awards degrees, while KSA, the Sadequain School, North City and the Central Institute that issue diplomas.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.
Understanding the role of an art educator or running an art institution needs strategic thinking and planning. There are many art theories which run parallel to each other while others completely clash and it is up to the art institution to pick the ones that they feel will benefit their students the most. I am narrowing down my research to the two degree awarding art institutions of Karachi and investigating their curriculum, individual student bodies and the work being produced.
Research Methodology:

I started my research by understanding what certain theorists and philosophers had to say about Fine Art and Art education. I chose Bernard Bolanzo, George Dickie and John Ruskin as I felt their theories were appropriate for my research paper and had a strong connection to the relationship of art education with society.

There are two main ways to further divide how educational institutions are funded: Public and Private Systems. This helped me taper down the art institutions for my case studies: the Visual Studies department at Karachi University and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. I understand the importance, prominence and affluent history of the National College of Arts but due to its location in Lahore, it does not lie within the parameters of my dissertation, which is limited to art institutions within Karachi. The reason I did not chose Karachi School of Arts is because it is not a degree awarding institution, it offers a diploma instead. Keeping in mind the difference in the number of years in both the institution’s establishment I feel that the visual art department at KU and IVS have a similar curriculum and an extremely contrasting student body which will aid my dissertation.

Due to the lack of information about these institutions online and for first hand information basis, I felt it was important for me to conduct interviews with people who would be able to be of great help and support for the purpose of my dissertation. I conducted interviews with Adeela Suleman and Duriya Kazi as they are the current heads of department at the institutions I am presenting as case studies. Adeela Suleman is the current head of the fine art department at IVS and studied and taught at KU for 8 years.
Interviewing her gave me her diversified opinion because of her experience at both institutions. Duriya Kazi is an experienced artist and art educator in Pakistan as well as the head of department at the Visual studies department at KU. I also interviewed Naiza Khan as she has also taught at both the institutions. This whole dissertation has been informed by discourses with the current students and alumni of both institutions, particularly IVS. Picking at students specifically for interviews is presenting one voice amongst many. This could result in individual biases and skew the research for my dissertation.
Findings and discussions:

This chapter discusses the information that was found during the course of this dissertation. Beginning with a brief introduction of The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and the Visual Studies department at The Karachi University it derives a comparative analysis between both the institutions. Keeping the basic difference as the most vital; public versus private, I have subdivided my research into finance, social status, political views, and personal experiences and exposure of the students.

Case study:

1) Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture:

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) was founded in 1989 by a group of professional architects, designers and artists. The School is registered as 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 that includes distinguished educationists, artists, architects, industrialists, bankers and media persons, in addition to three members nominated by the Government of Sindh. The Governor of Sindh is the Patron of the School.  

The Government of Sindh granted the IVS an independent charter in 1994 allowing it to award degrees to its students. It thus became the fourth private institute of higher learning in Pakistan with a degree awarding status. The admission procedure includes an aptitude test followed by an interview. IVS offers both, a degree and diploma for its students, depending on the student’s program selection. The Fine Arts and Design course have a four year programme while the Architecture programme is for five years. Other theory subjects such as art history and Pak studies are also taught along with other

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electives that the students can opt for themselves. The school formerly started in 1990 and has been functioning since the last twenty one years.\footnote{“About IVS.” \textit{Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS)}. Web. 21 June 2011. <http://www.indusvalley.edu.pk/aboutivs.html>}

2) Visual studies department – Karachi University

Karachi University is one of the oldest and possibly the largest state run University of Karachi. As much information was not available as to how the Visual studies Department came forward, my interview with Duriya Kazi, the head/project consultant of the Visual studies department, provided me with some background information on the thought process behind it:

‘The Vice Chancellor Dr. Zafar Zaidi initiated it and he invited me in the February of ’98 to discuss how to make this part of the University’. I advised him that being in Karachi it should not just be fine arts, it should have design and industrial design and various things because that is what the city is about. So we went through whatever possibilities there were. Basically, I think the idea was that KU is the only university that did not have a fine art department, all the other universities had it; Punjab University, Peshawar University, Balochistan University, Jamshoro University all of them had it. And so firstly it was important to do that, I think his own daughter had gone through NCA and eventually grad school so seeing it close quarter made him realize. Basically I think that was the thinking process behind it’.

The Visual Studies department at KU, although is a small unit of the University, it pretty much operates as a proper functioning art school. With its burgeoning ability as a department, it possesses the capability to grow much bigger and provide room for a much greater student body. Their structure is a little different as they have eight separate
programmes. These include; Architecture, textile design, industrial design, design in media art, fine arts, Islamic art and art history.

Both of these institutions have a similar foundation year programme and an end of the year degree thesis show. But although the ideology behind IVS and KU might be similar, the way these two institutions function is very different and the main reason behind this is that IVS is a private institution while KU is a state run university. Due to this reason there is a divergence in the way these institutions are operated, funded and maintained. This also attracts students and teachers from a varying social and financial background.

Finance and facilitation:

Funding is one of the main factors that cause the dichotomy between public and private educational institutes. Private institutions are funded by private organizations and other individuals, in addition to the fee paid by the students. Thus the fee structure is much higher and the facilities, much better. But do better facilities in private institutions mean a higher and better level in education and student output?15

Many countries throughout the world, especially the Scandinavian region of Europe, are generously funded by the Government. Their respective Government subsidizes their educational sector completely, providing sufficient facilities to the state run schools, colleges and universities. This often means that the students of those countries, region or international countries do not have to pay any tuition fee. This is

especially common in the case of art institutions. The Government in these countries is extremely encouraging towards ‘art’ as a whole and therefore grants art institutions with the proper provision of resources. The nonpayment of fee attracts more people who cannot afford the necessary expenses of art materials as the absence of tuition narrows down the costs. But this is not the case in Pakistan, Especially at Karachi University. Art, until very recently, was still considered a taboo field and still is considered by the masses of our country. The depiction of figural forms and the representation of nature in a certain way undermine God and his creation as it is being visually being tampered with. And since a very large population of Karachi University consists of religious parties and extremists, the Visual Studies department is not something that is considered worth funding. The Government does not subsidize the state run institution to the extent of fulfillment. With the current state of our economy in mind, the Government of Pakistan is making budget cuts which are resulting in a conflict of interests also affecting the education sector to a great extent.

Adnan Lodhi writes:

‘Although some educational quarters are criticising the government on cutting Rs 7 billion in the allocation to the Higher Education Commission compared to last year, most educationists and faculty member appreciate the cut, as according to them the budget is essential to stopping the ‘aristocratic attitude’ of varsity teachers. The pro-government cut teachers said that instead of using the HEC’s funding for educational developments and research work, a large chunk of the budget was used by public sector universities for their personal interests mainly the renovation of their offices and homes. It is worth noting that the government has allocated Rs 15.7 billion for the HEC compared to the current financial year allocation of Rs 22.5 billion. Although most teachers are criticising the government for cutting the budget, they should ask themselves if their performances in the past financial year deserve the increase they so vehemently demand. Instead of criticising the government, teachers should focus on a number of issues that have forced students
of various varsities to take to the roads such as the promotion of extremism and academic corruption.\footnote{Lodhi, Adnan. "Budget cut on education creates divide." \textit{Daily Times} 07 06 2010. Print.}

On the other hand, I feel that the budget cut by the Government means less money for public educational institutions. This results not only in a cut in the payroll but also a depletion of the institute’s facilities which are being offered. Thus the students are put in a difficult condition due to the economic deficiency of the country. During my visit to the Karachi University I did not see any signs of the Government’s financial input, let alone renovation of any sort. And this was confirmed when I questioned Ms Duriya Kazi about the problems that occurred within the Department due to the University being state run.

Ms Duriya Kazi said:

Many problems, I mean there are more problems than anything else. Within the departments everything is fine but the moment you are facing the University administration, they don’t understand our need for space, they don’t understand our need for equipment and funding. We come low on the list of priorities even though we have the highest employment rate and we have the six most popular departments in the University out of fifty two departments. So we are in a very good position to be encouraged but there is this resistance and suspicion from the religious parties which was very strong initially but it has become less now. Administratively it is very inefficient so it makes it very problematic for us to get proper funding and proper support. Basically we don’t get much support. Everyone is really nice to us and everybody appreciates us but when it comes down to the nitty gritty they can’t understand why we need fifty teachers so then I have to explain it to them that there are eight departments and there is a lot of resistance from other classes.\footnote{Check appendices.}

On further discussion I was told that the only form of payment to cover the running and maintenance cost of the department was via the student’s tuition fee. The fee structure includes a 4 month semester in which the students have to pay Rs 15,000. It started with an initial Rs 12,500 which was still high according to the University’s regular fee of Rs 2600. There is a vast difference in the fee structure of IVS and KU. At IVS a semester is 5 months long and the fee goes up to Rs
90,000. It is also supported by other multinational firms and philanthropists, thus the facilities provided are much better. We at IVS are provided with a stand by generator, bigger and separate studio space for each department, air conditioned library and computer room and a stationary shop with proper printing equipment. It was during my visit to Karachi University that I realized how different a public institution is from a private one. There will of course be an obvious difference between the Visual Studies ‘department’ and an entire art college i.e. IVS, but there is a lot that can be done at KU which is not being done. The Karachi University is like a mini city on its own and there are no limitations when it comes to space, so extending the department and letting it grow should not be a problem. But there are multiple obstacles that one needs to overcome at a state run institution. It is not similar to a private institution where each department’s head holds sufficient power to work things around the place and sorts things straight, it needs to run down multiple people in the administration and things are just left hanging if your cause is not worthy enough for the seniors to ponder over.

Adeela Suleman happened to share the same concerns;

‘Students in Indus Valley have so many facilities that cannot be compared to Karachi University’s. My studio space in Karachi that University where I used to teach sculpture was limited, there was the back of an air conditioner sticking out which used to give out hot air and our clay used to get wasted, so we had to put drawing boards to deflect that hot air to another direction. The miniature studio was made in a neglected corner, basically neither the department has money or the students and there are no facilities there. They had customized an old building so we already had a building available, where you people had a miniature studio allocated in the plan here at Indus there is a lecture hall, a separate print making studio, water facilities, bathrooms on every floors. I will give you a small example, in Karachi University there were very few bathrooms for 300 students considering there was only one bathroom for girls, two for boys and one bathroom for 40 teachers. These little facilities speed up your work. Over there I did not have a table or a place to sit or a computer whereas here I have four people working under me. I call out their names and my work gets done; assistance has been provided here. If in Karachi University you have to move a table either you have to do it yourself or wait till you get assistance. Within two months this semester you can see furniture coming in for the department; it would have taken me six months in Karachi University to get this done. There is a lot of bureaucracy there hence your file will only keep on getting transferred to tables that you get highly frustrated and
end up giving up on the task. Even though we have not been able to do it yet but eventually it will happen, they will get their own building.\textsuperscript{18}

Does this conclude that private institutions have a better provision of education for its students? And does the lack of facilities in public institutions hold back their students and restrict them from producing to their maximum capability? To answer this we need to further look into the student body that attends both these institutions and their backgrounds.

\textbf{Social, financial, political and religious background of the students:}

Karachi University and The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture are situated in two separate and opposing geographical locations of Karachi. Each location attracts people from its own locality. It is a matter of convenience for a lot of people. Although there are exceptions and certain students do attend KU and IVS from all over the city/country. Karachi is very evidently polarized into two halves and that is where the social stratification begins. The first halve consists of the ‘elitist’ crowd while the second halve consists of the 'Bourgeoisie’ or the social working class. This also plays a huge role in the choice that students make while choosing their educational institution. There is of course a huge difference in the kind of student body found at IVS in comparison to those at KU. In the course of this dissertation, while carrying out my research, I was repeatedly told that the students at KU were much more grounded than the students at IVS. I was constantly told how the students at IVS lacked the experiences than those at KU. But

\textsuperscript{18} Check appendices.
before discussing what my interviewees felt about the student body, it is important to know what kind of students attend both these institutions.

Being a student at the IVS, I have noticed a certain pattern in the type of students which are enrolled every year. There is a large majority of those who felt this was the next best option of not being able to go abroad for college, there are those who feel that art is a safe option and they will somehow get through and either get married or get a mediocre job with an IVS degree and then there is a considerably small population of those who came forward just for the sake of art. This is not a generalization on my part, as a matter of fact all my interviewees were in unison. As the fee almost goes up to Rs 90,000 per semester, students of a financially secured background make the larger majority. There is of course student aid available called ‘Karz-Hasna’ which means payable when able, due to which the school has been running in a deficit due to the nonpayment of these loans. But this does not increase the diversity in the student body to a great extent. While talking to Naiza Khan, it was drawn to my attention that if there were a hostel available, then students from all over Pakistan would be more willing to come to IVS for their education and there would be a greater diversity within the students similar to that of the NCA. In addition, Adeela Suleman told me that they had been recommending a hostel to the Board of Directors for a while now, but it was something which was not falling within the school’s budget. Therefore you get a vast majority of students which are shielded from the rest of the world and possess an evident lack of exposure and experiences. The work of art students is a byproduct of their individual experiences. Their work reflects their opinions and occurrences. The more exposed a child is to a certain environment the more awareness he/she will possess about
his/her surroundings. This also has a lot to do with the kind of background a person comes from, which is one of the most contrasting things about IVS and KU.

Adeela Suleman said:

‘I think this is one thing in Indus students and I don’t want to demean anyone, it’s not their fault, I think their parents need to keep them more connected to the country and city, they keep them in a protected environment and that’s why the teachers in Indus try to burst the bubble they live in; ‘get out, go in a rickshaw, travel in a taxi and because of those limited experiences work is produced in a bubble’. And this was unanimously agreed amongst all the interviewees.

Karachi University is a multicultural forum of a vastly diversified body of people; this proves to be an advantage and a disadvantage. Interacting with people from different backgrounds opens up a person’s mind and makes them more accepting of others around them. It keeps one grounded and consciously aware. On the other hand it also invites disagreements, arguments and differences in beliefs. KU consists of a highly politically and religiously charged student body and has always been known for its student unions and parties. There are constant riots and protests which result in violence and fights. This is also because the administration has little or no control over the student body. This is another major difference between KU and IVS. In a private institution there is a certain hierarchy that is followed. There is a board of directors, then the executive director, heads of departments, teachers and then the students. And this order is to be respected and instructions need to be followed. Any disruption of rules and action against the administration can result in expulsion. This is not the case at KU. Since it is a state run university the students are answerable to the Government, not to the teachers or the administration and hence possess the freedom of action. Such riots and political upheaval
within the student body probes the students to experience a different world where their beliefs and choices are strong enough to make a statement. And as these students study side by side they develop either an understanding of each other’s views and adapt to them or retaliate as they share an opposing perspective.

“Decades of political science research have concluded that education directly influences an individual's proclivity to participate in the political realm. In most empirical analyses, education is in fact the strongest predictor of political participation even when other socioeconomic factors are considered describes the overwhelming significance of formal education on political participation.”

With these two extremely different student bodies, the kind of work produced by both the institutions is along very diverse lines. Their work reflects their limited or immense exposure and experiences. Even with the lack of facilities and finance, the students at KU have had a more positive response and result, as said by all my interviewees. The availability of resources has proven to be more of a setback for IVS students even though it should aid their work and take it a notch higher.

Wahab Suri, a lecturer at IVS and the head of the Philosophy Department at KU, said’ The students at Indus don’t consider these facilities as a privilege but rather a right’. By this, he meant that since the students come from families that are already well off, they do not understand the meaning of struggle. They do not wish to indulge in anything which will need them to go an extra step, out of their comfort zone.

Adeela Suleman said:


20 Check appendices.
‘The differences in the experiences between the students of Karachi University and Indus can never be compared’.

When she was asked whether the facilities at IVS hold the students back she replied:

No I don’t think so. Facilities are provided so that your work is facilitated and you can produce ten times more and your thoughts are better. You are paying a certain amount of fee and you should be provided with basic facilities because they are your right, this course is dependent on those facilities. And if you are being provided with these facilities and you are still not working then it is your problem and not the schools problem. These facilities do not hold you back, students hold back themselves but I must add that the inquisitiveness has died.

Naiza khan in agreement stated:

‘At the moment I am lecturing at Karachi University, I find it to be a different atmosphere, I don’t think privilege makes you lazy but it makes you take things for granted, I think we all know that. When you have to struggle for something you value it much more or you value the people that you have much more.’

\[sup21\] Check appendices.
Analysis

The art world, as George Dickie mentions, has multiple layers to it. There are countless people who judge your work and have a certain amount of say in it. This starts when a student is in an art institution. Students at IVS constantly find their instructors opposing their ideas and criticizing their efforts. Although in the teacher’s defense, if they won’t correct us, who will? While the students at KU have said that their teachers support them throughout and encourage any radical idea they put forward. Many a times, students do not understand the intentions of the people teaching and guiding them during the course of their degree. And there is no doubt that almost every criticism is for the betterment of the student. The student realizes this mostly after graduating and stepping into the practical world. But this does not imply that teachers do not have any control over the kind of work a student produces. This may vary from institution to institution, and mostly a student’s work is processed and filtered through the faculty and then presented forward. And once you have stepped outside the boundaries of your educational institution, you find yourself in a world where other people have control over what your produce and whether it is selling material. When George Dickie talks about his institutionalist theory, he mentions how art is what it is made to be. ‘What is art?’ is a question only a few can answer, but if you point at a piece of art and ask, ‘is this art?’, there will be an instant ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This is usually a matter of concern for students who come from financially strained families. They do not have the liberty to experiment and go all out, but would rather choose the safe zone and create work that they feel people would relate to and buy. According to Wahab Suri, this is a little common at KU and if the teacher is aware of the student’s situation,
they won’t be pressed into producing something experimental. This of course is not the scenario at IVS. Thus there is a difference in the final product.

Another reason there may be a difference between the subject matter of the work produced in both the institutions is because of the vast difference in the student’s exposure to the world around them and their individual experiences. According to my interviewees the students at IVS are shielded from the rest of the world and therefore produce work in a bubble. While the students at KU are more exposed to what is around them are and thus more aware. These students come from various parts of Karachi, areas that most of the students at IVS have never been to. They travel in public transport and experience the everyday riots within and outside the University. This makes their experiences very different and thus gives them more exposure than students who are not travelling in other parts of the city. Had these children been living in safer areas or attending an institution on the safer side of the city, they would also not have the same exposure. When one is surrounded by political activists and religious extremists, their way of thinking automatically changes or at least gets affected. Hence, you will find students from both institutions producing very personalized work but since the students at KU experience many hardships, thus including them in their work seems more genuine compared to someone who talks about something they have not experienced personally. This does not make the student’s work at IVS ‘superficial’, they will produce whatever little they have experienced and that is what their work will reflect. Although, this does mean that these students should be more aware and start living outside their bubble, which is what their teachers want.
The provision of facilities at the institution and from home also plays a large role when it comes to the students' work. The availability of a large studio space, electricity, internet access and sound financial backing from the parents aids the student’s work in multiple ways, especially when it comes to the cost of materials. Some might say that these limitations result in better work for the students at KU but it could work either way.

Divergence in the subject matter in the work of the students at KU and IVS does not necessarily mean one is better than the other, it just means it has been filtered, processed, and affected by contrasting stimuli in completely different ways. The results are interesting as they are a reflection of each individual personality, their life and their take on the world around them. It shows their awareness or ignorance, their priorities or their comfort zones. So no matter what they produce, it is a genuine character sketch of the artist, once you dwell a little deeper than the surface.
Conclusion

Art education is the study of aesthetic understanding and an individual’s relationship with himself, his surroundings and society. Nurturing a student, making him aware of his innate talent and capability and teaching him ways to express himself in the freest and most unique form is the linking ideology between art educational institutions throughout the world.

Art education has been a comparatively recent acceptance in Pakistan and therefore there is a slight discrepancy in the teaching methods and results of different institutions. Karachi is perceptibly divided into two halves. The stratification of the citizens starts from here; so either you are in the ‘urban’ area of the city or on ‘the other side of the bridge’. Thus, people are socially divided into these two broad categories in relation to their geographical location. Karachi University and the Indus valley school of art and architecture are located in opposite ends of the city. Hence, there is a huge difference in the kind of students that attend these institutions. From the social and financial backgrounds to the political stability of the economy, there are uncountable factors in between resulting in such a diversity of thought in these two educational institutions.

Throughout my dissertation I have tried pinning down the major factors that are responsible for the contrasting results in the work of these art students. My research paper is more of an analytical comparison between two art educational institutions and how their products differ from each other in numerous ways. My aim was not to conclude my research with a bias, choosing the productivity of one institution over another, but rather leaving an open end for the reader to understand my intention behind my dissertation and
derive a conclusion for themselves. Although I feel that it is unfair for the viewers to presume the authenticity of the thought process behind the work or pre-judge it based on the institution the student is at, the work should be viewed only as art. The need to find a heartbreaking story behind each piece and a mental disability in each artist should not be the aim of the audience, instructor or buyer.
Bibliography


Interviews conducted:

Kazi, Duriya. Personal interview. Jan 2011

Khan, Naiza, Personal interview. Feb 2011

Suleman, Adeela. Personal interview. March 2011
Appendices

Interviewer: Sahar Ghanchi

Interviewee: Duriya Kazi

Head of the Visual Studies department, Karachi University

Date: January

Semi structured interview: Recorded

S.G: How long have you been here since the department was founded?

D.K: Well this in its presence, because there were many events in 1970 and 1991, this actually happened in 1987. It was proposed not by me but within the academic body. In ’98 October/November it was finally agreed that this department would be there and we started our classes in ’99.

S.G: What was the thought process before it was formed and how did it come about?

D.K: Well the Vice Chancellor Dr. Zafar Zaidi initiated it and he invited me in the February of ’98 to discuss how to make this part of the department. I advised him that being in Karachi it should not just be fine arts, it should have design and industrial design and various things because that is what the city is what the city is about. So we went through whatever possibilities there were. Eventually I had to take on and I had stopped
teaching so I agreed to take it on. Basically, I think the idea was that KU is the only university that did not have a fine arts department, all the other universities had it; Punjab University, Peshawar University, Balochistan University, Jamshoro University all of them had it. And so firstly it was important to do that, I think his own daughter had gone through NCA and eventually had grad so seeing it close quarter made him realize. Basically I think that was the thinking process behind it.

S.G: Did you face any difficulties earlier when you were figuring out how to go about the department when you were forming it?

D.K: Well I don’t know what you would define as difficult. The thing is that we were the newest department, most of the other departments that have been formed in the university have usually been extracted from a parent department so there were no transitions but this was a completely new thing. Secondly, its an academic university so placing this kind of activity that profession on practical in an academic environment had its own concerns. There I think initially it was just getting all the information because there isn’t an office. It is basically up to us to do it. There isn’t that kind of dedicated office that you had a structure that told you what you have to do. It was very much trial and error administratively speaking. We brought together a group of people, put together the curriculum and it had to be passed in the university by the academic counselor before we could initiate it. We were given no space, there was no funding so it had to come on our self finance. The funding usually happens when you start a department and apply for running costs, so it started as a self finance which is the reason we had to keep the fee higher than it is at the university. The university fee is about Rs.2600 a semester.
S.G: How long is one semester?

D.K: It’s a four month semester but students are paying Rs.2600 for very good education right upto the masters level and here we are charging Rs.15,000. At the time it started it was Rs.12,500. I have always felt bad about it. It should also be much less because the students have to pay for the materials on top of it so the expenses are much more. The whole idea of state university is you provide quality education to those who can’t afford private university.

S.G: How is the University funded otherwise?

D.K: No other way.

S.G: So the students pay the fee and that runs the department?

D.K: Yes

S.G: So how has the department evolved from the time it started to now? What are the additional changes?

D.K: I think the only real change in terms of the curriculum has been that we have started to teach film in fine arts and in graphic design. There was so much interest that we have created a separate media arts program so that’s the only major change. Otherwise we are constantly revising our curriculum every two years, we keep improving it, fine tuning it. The number has gone up, initially there were fifty students in the initial intake, now we take a hundred students.

S.G: How is the department structured like in Indus valley we have a miniature department or a printmaking department?
D.K: initially it was intended to be an institute but for some reason which, I was not over ther e at the time, they designated it as a department. This is a big problem for us and we have been proposing since ’99 that it needs to be an institute and we are still proposing that. The reason is its like like taking Urdu, Literature, English, Persian, Bengali, French etc and putting them in one department because they languages, so while taking all the arts and putting them together in one department because its all ‘the arts’, it does not work because we have eight separate programs, eight separate departments. Only foundation year is common. So in the mean time we have developed the idea of coordinators. They can’t be called heads of department although they should b, they are called correspondinators Currently we have several independent programs running, each one of them correspondentor and an assistant and we only have one centralized office. Fragmentedly it is very difficult, it puts a lot of pressure but we manage and we conduct hundred and eighteen exams a semester in two weeks and get our results on time so we do manage.

S.G: What are the eight separate programs?

D.K: Well we have architecture, then in design we have four subjects; textile design, industrial design, media arts which are now actually two things and ceramics and glass in which there are no students. Then in fine arts we have three programs; fine arts, Islamic art and art history again in art history there are no students.

S.G: What is the foundation year program like?

D.K: It is the same as it is at Indus Valley or NCA. The idea is to give them that transition because a lot of people have not studied art before they come here. From a vast majority of
students very few have done arts prior to coming here. It’s a transition between academic studying and coming into thinking, moving into pre art. It is to introduce them to basic tools and different mindsets and take away the fear they have and give them an experience of all the things they will be encountering later and the idea is to focus totally on skill building initially so that when they come onto concept they have already acquired at least the basic skills.

S.G: Do you have a certain criteria when admissions are happening?

D.K: Yes we actually have a process where whatever the university’s decided minimum percentage is required which is currently 45%. We take that and we have our own aptitude test in which they have to achieve 50% marks to pass, then we interview them and after the successful interview we have certain allocated spaces. Basically over many years we have had come to this conclusion that we actually want four qualities from a student; we want them to have observation skills which we get through the drawing, we don’t expect a beautiful drawing but we use it as a test of observation; we want them to have an interest in the world around them which we get through general knowledge, because everything that they doing is somehow related to society or for society; we want them to have a visual intuition and we want them to have an imagination, the rest we can do and they must have a certain degree of language skills either in Urdu or in English.

S.G: What do you do when hiring teachers? Do they need to have a certain art background?

D.K: We are very keen that they should be working professionals. We don’t want people who are just academics. We want people who are practicing because these fields change rapidly and then the thing is that it is not a bookish kind of a thing, we do want teachers
who have a degree of maturity. We very very exceptionally take students who are recent graduates, but we always prefer they should work for a year or two. There is a certain type of teachers that we need here because of the environment of the university because KU is like mini Pakistan, they have to take into account all the student politics, the conservativeness. At the same time the range of students you get here is very good so I personally think. This is something I say at the orientation also, that if you expect to be taught then no ones going to teach you anything over here but you will learn. So we try and create a situation where the idea is, the teachers cant teach anyone creativity but you can teach how to be different, how to be discriminating about creativity , you can teach them the tools with which they can express their creativity and you can teach them to develop a kind of context for their work so its very important that it is student centered rather than teacher centered.

S.G: Does your permanent faculty change?

D.K: We have no permanent faculty. We have got two people who are permanent. The reason is that although we have allocated positions I think fighting for service rules that are appropriate for the fine arts faculty and design faculty which is not reflected so the university has to be convinced that we don’t have PHds, MS degrees or M.Design or M.Arch and that there are also many new areas especially in film and computers where a person may have a degree in something else or may not have a degree at all especially if you’re going for Islamic Art. Because of that rules have been changed once by the HEC but we felt they did not far enough so we had now presented a new set of rules and on the basis of that we will make sure. At the moment we have two lecturers, one is a graduate
from Indus Valley and one is our university’s graduate who are currently first book band
type of thing. But otherwise we have an average of 50 teachers.

S.G: As the head of the visual art department what difficulties do you face because it is a
public institution?

D.K: Many problems, I mean there are more problems than anything else. Within the
departments everything is fine but the moment you are facing the university administration,
they don’t understand our need for space, they don’t understand our need for equipment
and funding. We come low on the list of priorities even though we have the highest
employment rate and we have the six most popular departments in the university out of
fifty two departments. So we are in a very good position to be encouraged but there is this
resistance and suspicion from the religious parties which was very strong initially but but it
has become less now. Administratively its very inefficient so it makes it very problematic
for us to get proper funding and proper support. Basically we don’t get much support.
Everyone is really nice to us and everybody appreciates us but when it comes down to the
nitty gritty they cant understand why we need fifty teachers so then I have to explain it to
them that there are eight departments and there is a lot of resistance from the class levels.

S.G: The initial reason why I started this dissertation is that there are many lots of things
that I as a student might not agree to in the institution that Iam in at the moment. I have
always wondered ….. if you werew studying from Miss Duriya Kazi things would have
been different for you, so you actually never took the initiative of visiting the university.

D.K: Why would it be different?

Me: I don’t know, this is what I want to understand. How is it different?
D.K: Well I will tell you why I studied in this university way way back. I think it was a turning point in my life and I think what happens is at this university we are unique more than Indus or NCA, that we are placed in a larger academic environment. So students what they learn in the classroom is one thing but what they learn about society, the environment they have access to lectures and subjects other than their own. They can sort of place themselves in a larger social context which I think is the strength of this department. And you know just the whole culture of the student out twenty four thousand students is a big thing so you do feel. KU generally, because of soo many private universities coming up and the city being polarized into that side and this side, a lot of people actually do not appreciate that there is very high quality education and there are very fine minds in the university. If students want to research like somebody in textiles wanted to do a research in a plant, they went to the botany department and they found a plant that only exists in KU and they were able to develop that. They can also go to the zoology department for drawing, so you know there is this wider access which is nice. They are very independent because there are no family/parents, they have to come by bus or walk for miles so I think all of that is really good in terms of your character building.

D.K: The student body we get, we might get a student whose father owns buses and we might have someone whose father owns a huge factory so you have a whole range. You have people from Defence and Clifton and you have people from Korangi, Landhi and North Karachi so I think that is really nice. For me it has always been an eye opener because there seems to be no geography to challenge. We tend to think you have done your O/Alevels but actually family is more important. If you have come from a literary,
educated family in which ever field it is, the students have a head start but then there are people whose family is not very educated and then they are highly motivated. The other thing that happens is students tend to become very self allianced in institutions like this so they have no safetyness. Many of them try to fund themselves which we discourage but half the time we don’t know if they’re giving tuitions or working at call centers at night so I think that the people who come over here have almost always fought with their parents to come here, parents may end up very happy because in these fields thei think the jobs are very well guaranteed and not just that you get employment you can be self employed. Economically it has become more and more attractive. What I find the most gratifying is that you have someone coming in on a bus with art project in their hands and someone asks them in the bus what are you doing? And they are spreading the word that there is art and design so more and more people who are coming saying oh this someone in my street who comes here and I want to come. So in a way I feel that if you want to bring change, you want to bring art into society you work on the heart of society. Many people say why don’t you have a city campus because you know they have all types of problems over here and I feel it is so easy to do it. There is Karachi School of Arts now for eight years and I thought that was very street and radical and now even that feels safe in comparison to KU. For example in the beginning when they apparently made a proposal that there should be this department, someone in the academics council said that today you will start art and tomorrow there will be dancing and singing here and there were concerns like normally university girls are on one side and the boys on the other side, we can’t do that. Initially people started saying to me that you are bringing westernization here to which I used to say how is this westernization when we are focusing on our culture and our society and all our
students are working deeply rooted in this society, what could be more western than teaching English literature or mathematics or something like that. Surely people have gotten used to it and initially we used to have outdoor drawings around here and then one day one lady came to me from the arts lobby which is like the sheet center of the university everyone wants to ….. and she said your children are drawing there and I thought she was going to kill me but she turned around and said it was so nice. We had jamat-e-Islami boys coming and asked us why is the model removing his shirt? And I sent over a message that this is because they have to learn the body, they are doing architecture, textile, they must know the proportions of the body and I could give them cds to study at home but then there will be totally nude figures so then they kind of understood. Basically there has been a lot of negotiating going on but I love it, thinking you’re changing people’s perception. The same person who objected the first time came to me afterwards and he said that I take back what I said and you’re doing very professional courses.

S.G: Ofcourse, that is the aim of my dissertation, I really want to change the stereotype of that part of the city and that Indus valley on the other part of the city and we sort of feel like Indus Valley is the contemporary art place and people should see the thesis there. I feel when you graduate from either here or there, the institution has a lot to do with the kind of artist you become but then art rises above that, when you put your work up in the gallery its not about ‘this is KU’s student’s work and this is Indus Valley’s Student’s work’

D.K: To some extent you can, for the emerging talent for which the opening is in the evening today and I found another example from(inaudible) Punjab University, you have a lot of foreground in the work so it feels like from a fake vantage point you are looking or observing something. If you look at the NCA lot they are always reflecting of art history,
contemporary art history, there is always a dialogue there. If you look at Indus Valley, its very introspective work, its about myself, my world, I don't mean it in a criticism but I just mean that its that kind of work that will be trying to understand one zone environment. If you look at Karachi School of Art its very preconfines, very textured and I find that in the university the students are dealing with the individual against larger social issues so I think its very much about being a girl in this environment or the politics of it. Its very much about the isolated individual trying to establish that place in a larger society so I think there are differences but theyre not qualitative differences in the sense that not one is better than the other it just defines as you say the experience you have but then what happens is that they graduate and I think what happens in the institution is irrelevant, I think its what happens after is what really matters and the you find that they join up, that people from three or four institutions getting together, you find people of common work processes for example one of our graduates Abdullah Samar started this movement called the Dhaba Art Movement. Because he said we all sit in dhabas. So they basically started getting graduates together from Beaconhouse, from NCA, from Indus, from KSA and ……… they’ve done exhibitions out in open spaces, they’ve done interactive work with people so eventually like-minded people come together regardless of where they come from.

S.G: Someone told me earlier that you offer a subject called public art over here?

D.K: No we don’t. its just that the kind of fine art we teach, we are a little bit different from the others in the sense that we have an integrated fine art program. You don’t specialize in in painting or sculpture, there are no separate departments because I think currently the way art is going it is very much about crossing, We don’t have to define things and we are very much about providing contemporary art not like the Punjab
University is known for traditional stuff and also the lives that people lead are so interesting. Karachi is a hub of change, of melting points of varied culture and it has to be close to their life, I don’t think art is about the art object, its about the experience of being an artist so I think from that point of view of some of it might get transformed into an object; some of them might get into another kind of a public art work. We’ve had people who have done public art work as well.

S.G: What are the major differences between Indus Valley and Karachi University?

D.K: Well I know Indus has a large Qarz-e-Hasna system also so I am sure that the people come from a variety of backgrounds so what happens is that people come from a variety of backgrounds so what happens is dominant kind of level. For example you go to NCA. You get people from NCA and you get people from Gilgit and you get someone from Defence to Quaideen Karachi and the defence ones comedown a bit and the Gilgit ones come up a bit and the NCA culture develops. So I think every institution has its own culture and maybe you know within Indus it has changed quite a lot because I haven’t been there for quite a lot because I haven’t been there for quite a long time, I go very rarely so I think probably the fact that administratively I think it’s a loser administrative structure (inaudible) university doesn’t really interfere much. The administration trusts the head of the department a lot so whatever we recommend, they usually follow unless(inaudible) so the horrible rules and even if we can justify it they go along with it.

S.G: About the fourth year, the theses year, how does that work out? Because we have advisors, they can be either three or ten and they critique us twice a week and then later on
once a week. With us its not mostly what we want to do, its more about what they think is right in our concept, if they can’t (inaudible) of a certain thing.

D.K: Its sort of tempting for teachers to do that but I don’t actually agree to that at all and this is something I learnt from Karachi School of Art also (inaudible) then I realized that a teacher is a facilitator and basically we are not pouring into you, we are enabling you to get out what’s inside you and we’re teaching you what’s best to do next and its very tempting. I mean Mehreen, our head of department is always keeping a check, it’s very tempting to say why don’t you do this, why don’t you do this and she’s always telling me don’t give ideas, encourage them to discover what they have and the way you give ideas. Its probably a shame in Pakistan we don’t have proper art galleries and our students don’t have the money to pay (inaudible) and see stuff but these days on the internet there is a lot and you can probably get to see a fair amount although there is no substitute for seeing the real thing. So I think as long as you expose them to a very wide range of work and then you sit back and let them find their way.

S.G: So would you say the students have more say in their thesis or they are grilled till the very end?

D.K: Oh we certainly challenge them continuously but I think nobody tells them what to do. We teach them to be discriminating about what they’re doing so they have to choose. I mean we certainly encourage them to get all these things out of their system by the second year; my dead uncle or my lonely self, all of that kind of stuff and them you start thinking more widely about your work and what your role is (inaudible). artist. So I think it’s a very delicate thing, the teaching of art or any creative process because you can very easily crush
the confidence of the student and the whole thing is we are not going to be there afterwards so its very important for the students to learn themselves what is a worthy idea and what is not so we certainly challenge them but if a student insists on doing a certain amount of work and if we think he will get a bad jury, we cant do anything about it, I don’t, belief can.

S.G: Do you offer theory courses along with the other studio courses?

D.K: We have a lot of theory courses and that’s what makes us also quite different for example you have history of ideas where some one from the philosophy department comes and teaches here so from Plato to (inaudible) How much of it is retained I don’t know but I think my theory is that if nothing when someone asks you about Derija or (inaudible) you don’t say “Uh who?” infact you say “yeah I remember I read that somewhere.

S.G: Will I find the information in the booklet you gave me?

D.K: Well not in too much detail. You can see the course titles and the course outlines. So I think theres that. We do history of cultures and quite phenomenal courses and we have all our compulsory subjects like Islamiat, Pakstudies, English. But I think it’s a wonderful experience that students go through and I love watching the transformation of them from when they come. Absolutely they’ve gone through stringent courses so you think they’re capable but there’s kind of wide eyed. What exposures do our kids have? Very little. The parents, everybody says, they keep them trapped in the house because its to dangerous to go somewhere else, they don’t watch tv, they don’t read books, they (inaudible) news channels because no young person wants to watch that. They don’t read books, there are some who eventually do like they have good theatre, the students who accelerate on their
own. We have a reading class, some kids take a lot of part in sports. A lot of awards have been won by them interdepartmental. They get the opportunities to got abroad a lot, they get scholarships and so on. Our kids have gone and done masters and some of them come back, peoples lives change here. Normally what happens is that parents want them to be engineers or doctors or do an MBA something like that and if you don’t fit into it then you become a useless person for everyone in life or they get involved in political parties or or some other gangster behavior. So I feel the more people come to art from these environments you watch them grow. Quite people make a lot of noise in the beginning and till the end they don’t make any noise so that sort of glow knowing which is very nice.

Interviewee: Naiza Khan

Well known artist, former teacher at IVS and KU.

Date: February

Semi structured interview: Recorded

N.K: The issue of subject matter we should talk separately. I mean after, because I’d like to know what you feel in terms of the content of the subject matter of being produced. But I think that you know ive been jurying its degree show for eighteen years, which is its quite a long time! And if you have chosen Karachi and if you have chosen indus or KU, its fine, you’ve taken, you know you’ve decided to take public sector, private sector but if we forget that for a moment and we open it up a little bit more I think you can talk into at least at some point in you dissertation to discuss the wider framework. And you need to then
discuss NCA perhaps just because it has a longer history and because of that longer history you are able to see the consequences of certain situations that you find at NCA. And at the same time you have to take a wider framework and look at Jhamshoro or Karachi School of Arts or CIAC and discuss their successes or failures. So first of all it’s funding. Theek hai na. So you have that as one issue and its quite, you know, obvious that you are an institution, um a private institution where the fees are higher, the teachers are getting paid more, the students are paying higher fees and you attract a different kind of student body. Somebody who’s coming from a village cannot afford that fee even if you have Qarz-e-hasna. Um and you have maybe 5% of the students on that. So on the other hand if you have an institution which is partly government run or federally run, then you have the government subsidizing, and the fees are 300 rupees a month or 3000 rupees a month, or you have scholarships on merit level across the board. Or you have the quota system, for example, which I know NCA does have. But I know that at one point NCA was federally run or provincially run, but the shift happened at some time and it made quite a big difference to the institution in the long run. Because I think I want to look at NCA just for a moment and tell you my experience of what I have observed in the comparison of NCA versus let’s say Indus where I’ve taught for many years. Um and I will also go back to something that Munnawar mentioned in his talk with me today. When you get students from all over the country, you get some from Baluchistan; you get a guy from a small village in Sindh, u get somebody from SAWAT, somebody from FATA, you know they have to take someone in from each side. It’s that Quota that they had to bring in someone and actually it’s really interesting, few years ago jurying the NCA group I felt, what Munnawar said, it’s so true that the perception and the kind of imagery and the kind of
edginess that was coming into the degree show was very evident and it’s been carried on
the shoulders of those students who are coming in from very far flung away areas which no
longer are far flung because they are in our media on one level and right in the spotlight
and those students are a kind of, also experiencing firsthand what we’ve experienced
secondhand. And so that kind of very urgent and very immediate sense of what is
happening around us is relayed through their work. whether it’s (inaudible) is beside the
point is that those voices are coming in. theek hai, so this for you is an important factor that
has been on the issue of not only the subject matter that’s coming in but also that sense of
inclusion of voices from across a national, you know, frame work. So art then becomes a
very important, it’s function becomes very important because you are getting voices which
are being resonating from across the national, you know, scale. Where as not just coming
in from the small urban elite perhaps. The other thing is at NCA has again a (inaudible)
only because it has had so many years of, you know, this turnover. And one sees through
that process or that progression, is that, you get people sensibility, the way that social
review evolves, is extremely specific to these logistics that I just described, that you know
people are coming from different places and so that the social review that that creates is a
very very vibrant kind of space, it’s also very difficult place to negotiate. You have a
hierarchy, I mean if you have your Lahore sort of bachas rubbing shoulders with somebody
coming from you know Quetta or somebody coming from Peshawar, you have language
issues which have to be reconciled, you know there are lots and lots of issues which are not
art issues perhaps which are reconciled through art perhaps. You know which is also very
exciting, I remember, you know, many, some years sitting in one of the, meetings in which
we were looking at just the student body that’s coming in or just taking certain issues
which were taking place in fine arts and one of the faculty members said that you know language is such a problem and we are not doing enough to address this issue kyun kay koi bacha jis ki urdu nahin achee tau is ka yeh tau matlab nahin kay they don’t, they are not cool, or I remember that in my studio classes, a girl who was not so well versed in English and the others all were, she felt completely (inaudible) to be extended, she did not even go on the trip to cairo of wherever they were going that year. You know she really really felt on the margins of that class, she didn’t feel accepted and she thought, already iam not getting permission, and on top of that the level of comfort with her peers was really negligible. So, you know, this whole social review is very important. Because it becomes the breeding ground of many other hierarchies that evolve within the (inaudible) you know what you’ve learnt in school is what you do with in the kind of hierarchy that is evolved through are educational process, where there is somebody who is speaking different urdu and cannot speak good English or whether there are people who are aware that ok language is a little different but it’s not that different that it should create hierarchies or conjunctions. So I’m just talking on a broader level which is not necessary aaj but it is also its main part of you focus because after all your personal, your education institute is an art education institute and then what it does is, it also brings art into center stage because all of these different people are making work which then become part of the main stream or the sort of way that the things build up from you know art school work to galleries, galleries goes into another terrain and into the market place, you know all of that, sort of column of a base, how wide is your base to start off with. That you set (inaudible) starting in a place like NCA I remember talking to Saleema Hashmi about this, you know, she was talking about designs of Khulood mirza and Jamal shah, you know, creating the same which allows for
many many different kinds of people with many different kinds of background to accept your differences, through your structure, your institutional structure has to be very very giving of those differences to start with. So that, you know, leave that for a moment. I mean I feel like i've said a little (inaudible) why that structure is very important that it incorporates that sense (inaudible) and the other thing is that the fact that people are accommodated just through your district, just like having a hospital, you know, 10 years ago suggesting to the terms set that they should have a hospital that perhaps, you know is shared by any of these students you know so that you can get people from other parts of the country to Indus valley which will change the demography of the institution drastically.

But they refuse, I mean that there is so many problems with having a hospital, you know, many problems were sighted but the point is that you have to start somewhere. If you have a hospital, (inaudible) and slowly slowly that grows. You start from 10 every year you add 5 or you add 10, Kafi tadaat barhti jaati hai. So the fee structure, the whole kind of policy of bringing in students from other kinds of backgrounds, allowing for their fee structure or allowing for ability of the people from not so privileged backgrounds seems very very important. Because Art you know is often created through a desire to you know through a desire to struggle and express yourself. I know that a lot of us have a very comfortable and privileged upbringing and I think, im not saying that necessarily you have to be down trodden to be able to produce good art work but im just saying that one has to give equal opportunity to people. Karachi University you looked at, you know, you have seen the lack of funding and the lack of resources that they suffer from but I think in the last 3-4 years they’ve done very well, introduces some very good artists and I think that starting from zero, they are starting from quite a good position because they’ve had some good people
teaching, I mean they’ve had people who’ve given their time and put in a lot of effort to, and continue to dedicate themselves to that place, probably because they feel that they are investing their time in a place where they get access to a student body which is very very diverse. You know there are a lot of differences, I mean you can see that there are lots of issues, are there are lots of advantages perhaps at the Indus Valley, perhaps the pay scales for the teachers, so perhaps it would attract teachers to come and you know, be there on a long term basis, because they know they need to work, at the end of the day to survive. My experience of the student body over 17 years, comparing it to say Karachi school of arts, where I gave workshops in 1991 was that a place like Karachi school of art, they really really wanted to learn. I mean they would just, you know, the level of eagerness in studio classes was different. I mean Indus since the beginning in 91, 92, 93 were in the sense of urgency and the student body was interesting, and they did also have that sense of dedication to their work. At Karachi School of Arts there was a real sense of wanting to absorb as much as possible. So I never could sit idly for a minute, there was never a minute wasted, you know, and I would be on my toes because the students were on their toes and they would constantly ask questions, they would constantly find out “how to do this”, “how do we do that”. They would bring in solutions. I remember a young student who was married; you know she was making paper at home in her kitchen and bringing in samples of handmade paper and saying, you know, “this is how I am making paper, is this the right way? What am I doing wrong” because you know I used to teach paper making every time to student before we started print making we preferred making paper because the quality of paper here amongst other things, not good enough for (inaudible) print making. So you know things like that, and they would come to me with solutions to technical problems.
That kind of approach was quite different, they were very very proactive. That’s what I found, and of course they came from very different social class. I remember once we -

(inaudible) in Karachi school of Arts (inaudible) 1995, 1996 perhaps where a student who was a son of a carpenter made the most amazing installation, and he made this installation which was a table, a kind of a dining table, and he carved the legs and everything, and the table was just held together by these ropes and you know it looked kind of imbalanced a it was a kind of a metaphor for the imbalance in the country and the whole kind of structure, kind of featuring, and wobbling on itself and not having the kind of support, so it was kind of like a metaphor for the establishment and the government, us zamanay mein. So it was just like, all his work was very interesting, very conceptual, quite political obviously but really informed by his own sense of reality and his own condition within society. So I think this kind of commentary is interesting, I find that perhaps you found that the subject matter across these different schools was very very different. Perhaps within Indus valley there is a more introspective field to how issues are taken up, or perhaps, you know, certain themes are aware, which are more inward looking perhaps although I don’t know that’s necessarily true because I think I remember, you know when Afghanistan was invaded by U.S forces in 2001, you know that year there was so much issue based work and again students were really looking at the political reality around them. Everybody was doing work (inaudible) (inaudible) or the bombs or the impact of the soldiers on the ground so it was quite a politically charged student body. David was teaching sculpture and I think he was more interested, and I think the teacher also have had a huge impact on the kind of work that’s been produced certainly.

S.G: Why’d you stop teaching at Indus?
N.K: I haven’t really stopped teaching at Indus. I stepped back because taught for 17 years and I really wanted to focus on my studio practice and you know if they offer me a position to teach, I would be happy to come in as a lecturer. I just can’t be decent anymore. You know I think teaching at my stage in my career is more possible to do in 9 to 4 job on that basis, but at this point I can come in at a very strategic level and do advisory or do specifically targeted kind of work. Because that’s the amount of time I have available and I would be happy to teach if they offered me a position to teach. But also you for a practitioner, the balance of teaching and studio work is very critical and I think dedicating 17 years is a long time. Pretty much on over-full time basis at certain point through that process, teaching 7 days a week really, round the clock, student coming over talking, there was never any sort of timings, you know, it 4 o’clock, I got to leave now. You know they would be working around much more than that I think. Especially in the beginning because there was a sense of wanting to establish and wanting to ground the fine arts department and you know getting two males for print making, taking students to the bazar and you know setting up more sort of discussions outside, inside school. So that was a very intensive period. But at the moment I am lecturing at Karachi University, again you know, very strategically, tutorials and lectures, very specific lectures, which are of interest I hope to students that are offered to me which I am developing out of my own research into certain areas of art production so I think that again I find it to be a different atmosphere, I don’t think privilege makes you lazy but it makes you take things for granted, I think we all know that. When you have to struggle for something you value it much more or you value the people that you have much more. If those people are around you 24/7 “oh we’ll see tomorrow, oh we’ll ask them that question today we’ll ask them tomorrow, oh ok next
week I will think about that”. But having said that I am not putting down the student body, I am just saying that the environment is such that perhaps it breeds a certain kind of complacency, you know what I mean. I know that when artists come through VASL and they’ve come and lecture it, they’ve gone to Indus, they’ve gone to KU, they’ve gone to NCA. Recently last year there was an artist who was here on an international visit and she spent a lot of time in Karachi, dedicated a lot of time on certain lectures. When she went to NCA she said it was a completely different story. She said that they were so wired up and this was surprising coming back because we are teaching and we are kind of not realizing the differences of the student body. She said that the kind of questions that they asked at NCA, she did not get those kind of questions anywhere. They were so wired up and curious to the kind of work that she was doing, they just responded in a different way. And again now you have BNU, so it’s a completely different terrain. I get very different opinions about BNU students, some people say they’re really lazy and they’re really spoilt and some people say they are really well informed and my experience of meeting is yes they are very well read, very well informed about theoretical discourses, contemporary discourses much more than the NCA students or perhaps much more than Indus Valley students. You know you have to judge for yourself where they are coming from, I think the BNU student body is improving every year perhaps because they have also invested into a lot of good teachers and perhaps dedicated teachers and again it is the same feel of what Indus was in the first three four years, you know that sense of trying to establish a new art college, trying to make it different from what is elsewhere, trying to offer a curriculum which is more relevant to or different to other courses are because you know all the art college curriculums are basically they’ve been rehatched from the Bauhaus, they have been
rehatched from the British art school system or from the USA but more so I would say from the British art school system that’s what the courses have been maxed on and I think its only very recently that those courses have been re-evaluated and administrators have started to think “ok what is relevant to us or whats important to us in Pakistan or whats important to the art scene or the art students that are coming in?” So little things just like being able to do your dissertation in a different language because what you have to say is valid even if it is in urdu or in english, things like that happened, inclusion of photography in the curriculum for fine art students, inclusion of digital work within your course.

Adeela Suleman:

Head of the fine art department at IVS.

Date: March

Semi structured interview: Recorded

S.G: First of all, tell me when did you become the head of department at Indus Valley?

A.S: In 2008

S.G: How did you decide to become the head of the department?

A.S: The school called me. I have been teaching at the Karachi University for six years and for the past six years I was a visiting faculty and now I am coordinating the fine art department here.

S.G: What is the difference between the student bodies that you see in Indus and KU?
Adeels: I think its about the experience. The experience of Indus students is very limited whereas students in Karachi university have more genuine experiences and that is there life so when they produce work they don’t have to create a ‘made up’ story, they don’t look out they just talk about their lives so they about the 17 crore population. However in Indus Valley the students come from a different class because of the fee structure and there is no problem of coming from a different class, its accident of history if you’re born rich or poor but what you do in that state of being poor or rich is a personal decision. If you are rich and want to remain confined to four walls that is problematic. There are many rich people who do amazing work and probably they know more about the city than a poor man does and they know a lot about their experiences with the city, country and people and you can’t create a parallel that. But the approach of the students in Indus Valley is very limited because their experiences are very limited and they don’t know that when they are talking about poverty or about a political party; they have never been in a political rally nor they have experienced poverty hence their view is more of an outsider and its very superficial. This is one difference. The other difference between the students of KU and IVS was that students used to come from every of class of the society to KU; they used to be from the richest to the poorest, like the child of a peon or a chaprasi or you know anyones child could come. So that mix used to keep one grounded to the ground. Over here what happens is all the children are the same sort, they hang around in the same sort of groups, talk similar, and a lot of artificial problems have been created here like one said ‘You know my abba wakes me up at 7 in my room and it’s a big problem for me that he wakes me up’ They don’t have real problems like there is a saying that the rich’s only problem is that they don’t have a problem that’s why they create problems so I think this is one thing in
Indus students and I don’t want to demean anyone, it’s not their fault, I think their parents need to keep them more connected to the country and city, they keep them in a protected environment and that’s why the teachers in Indus try to burst the bubble they live in; ‘get out, go in a rickshaw, travel in a taxi and because of those limited experiences work is produced in a bubble. In KU, the student’s approach is very different. Students in Indus Valley have so many facilities that cannot be compared to Karachi University’s. My studio space in Karachi that University where I used to teach sculpture was limited, there was the back of an air conditioner sticking out which used to give out hot air and our clay used to get wasted, so we had to put drawing boards to deflect that hot air to another direction. The miniature studio was made in a neglected corner; basically neither the department has money nor the students and there are no facilities there. They had customized an old building, so it was not we already had a building available where you had a miniature studio allocated in the plan like here in Indus there is a lecture hall, a separate print making studio, water facilities, bathrooms on every floors. I will give you a small example, in Karachi University there were very few bathrooms for 300 students considering there was only one bathroom for girls, two for boys and one bathroom for 40 teachers. These little facilities speed up your work. Over there I did not have a table or a place to sit or a computer whereas here I have four people working under me. I call out their names and my work gets done; assistance has been provided here. If in Karachi University you have to move a table either you have to do it yourself or wait till you get assistance. Within two months this semester you can see furniture coming in for the department; it would have taken me six months in Karachi University to get this done. There is a lot of bureaucracy there hence your file will only keep on getting transferred to tables that you get highly
frustrated and end up giving up on the task. So instead of teaching your energy gets wasted in these tasks like trying to acquire the basic facilities; water cooler, availability of clean bathrooms with water for teachers and students, computers available when needed and a working projector. We have a generator here but we ridicule the facilities provided; if Indus provides electricity for two hours out of four then we should be grateful because if the electricity is gone for eight hours then it is gone for eight hours because they do not have backup generators or tube lights, the only option a teacher has is to either call off the class or continue teaching it in the heat and dark. People still teach there in the heat, I have done that. I taught there for six years. And we never complained because this is how the university is but we never stopped working for the better environment. Even though we have not been able to do it yet but eventually it will happen, they will get their own building. Therefore the differences in these experiences between the students of Karachi University and Indus can never be compared. I remember last year this student missed a day of school and when we inquired she replied that she could not come because her husband took the car to which our next question was if her parents had a car and she informed us that they were out too following to which we asked that if she did not have a car would she not come to school and she said that no she would not. Female students in Karachi University, 18 years old would just change four buses all by herself be it from Nazimabad or from Korangi or from Lyari and would reach Karachi University. Hence these experiences go missing in the work and always remember that work will not be better because there are facilities available, like for example they say that a bad craftsman cries because his tools are not good, it only depends on your thinking. In no way I mean to demean the girls in Karachi University but they gather paper even it has to be from the
trash or the floor. I have a lot of respect for them because they manage within the limited resources that they have. It is those students only that are now working full time as practicing artists. As compared to Indus Valley graduates, more graduates from Karachi University become practicing artists whereas Indus Students do different things like they join tv channels, become stage designers or go abroad for masters. If there are ten graduates form Karachi University, six would be practicing artists.

S.G: Do you think the facilities provided to us here in Indus, they are sort of holding us back?

A.S: No I don’t think so. Till you do not provide anything, facilities are not provided to hold back the teachers. Facilities are provided so that your work is facilitated and you can produce ten times more and your thoughts are better. You are paying a certain amount of fee and you should be provided with basic facilities because they are your right, this course is dependent on those facilities. And if you are being provided with these facilities and you are still not working then it is your problem and not the schools problem. These facilities do not hold you back, students hold back themselves but I must add that the inquisitiveness has died. Now adays you just type a word on the computer and you get 50,000 links. When I was studying in this school or in Karachi University and we received one link of a book we used to go in rickshwas or taxis or cars and search for that book in atleast three libraries in different locations, the internet was not accessible to us at all. When you have so much power within your facilities and vast knowledge available and still it is not being made use of then it is your problem and nobody elses because you are not making use of it. The approach is that you got it easy. We were brought up in the times of Ziaul-Haq, we used to study in a constrained environment and everything provided was limited. Just
imagine the exposure you get from the tv, it provides you with visual information 24/7. We did not have such visual information; we only had two channels; PTV and PTV 2. PTV 2 used to try to be a little liberal and used show programs little off the track and sometimes showed anti-government shows that criticized the government in a very subtle way. Whereas PTV 1 felt like a representation of Zia-ul-Haq’s manifesto. People used to get fire for not wearing the dupatta properly and we studied in that environment, Pakistan was not so liberal at that time. Just look at the amounts of galleries that have opened up in the past decade or the institutions that have opened up. Karachi University’s institution is only ten years old, it was not there before that. BNU has opened, Karachi School of Art which is the oldest is now trying to be able to give out degrees and that is why they are getting their charter done and speaking to the HEC. Indus Valley has been around since seventeen years. There was only Karachi School of Art which had people like Riffat Alvi and those artists are still working in that environment. The batched graduating from here have the dilemma and I am still struggling why this is happening; firstly most of the people go out for masters and now they have started to come back, those who left three four years back. I am the only one from my batch who is a full time working artist from the total of ten and none of them used to work which is something to ponder. We had all the facilities and people do not do it for money where as girls in Karachi University do it for money because they need jobs for their livelihood and they apart from all of that they opt for an auction where their earning is risky, if they sell their painting then only they will get money or they won’t and their parents will survive. Considering all of this they still take a chance and produce work whereas students from affluent schools have the option to not work and they still survive because they do not have the survival need. This boy from NCA, his father
was a farmer and his wife used to embroider and that is how she was paying her husband’s fee and the work produced from such experiences is very different as compared to people sitting at home complaining my mother said this or my father said this, or my mother does not let me hang out with my friends or she wears a burqa. That is why you all have superficial experiences and that is why your work is also superficial, it is not your fault that your life is affluent, it is the accident of history where you were born fantastic but that does not mean you waste your life and you do not try to find out how your country is run, what does the 17 crore population do or how many people live in Karachi and how do they live their lives. Sending a child to school is exhausting for parents, petrol is very expensive and Zardari has changed the basic salaries to Rs.6000 so how ill people pay the bus fair and what will they save for food and if these things are not thought of then the work produced will always be superficial.

S.G: The student body does not come from all over Pakistan because we also do not have a hostel, so what in your opinion should be done?

A.S: There should definitely be a hostel. Aisha and I are the only ones who have brought this up in every faculty meeting when we meet the executive committee that if there are no hostels here, the class issue will not get resolved because living in Karachi is so expensive as compared to the rest of Pakistan, so even if a child is getting the fee he cannot sustain himself until and unless he is living with a relative or his entire family shifts here.

S.G: We are making a park next door, why can’t we make a hostel there?

A.S: we can not because this park is the government’s amenity plot and no construction can happen there. Every neighborhood has such plots where construction cannot happen
and such things are built over it which can be used by the entire community and it has been given to Indus because it is adjacent to Indus and they agreed to provide some material o it can be sustained and we can maintain it.