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National Institute of Design, 1966
Campus under construction
Pladi, Ahmedabad
Source: D'Source

HISTORY

In 1958 upon a request from the government of India, Charles and Ray Eames produced a document called the India report. The report was meant to serve as a recommendation for a program that would mitigate the increasing deterioration of design and quality in consumer goods, and help train small industries to become globally competitive. Rich in its study and understanding of the Indian design identity, the Eames' identified three key advantages that India as a nation, a culture and a people could build upon. Bear in mind that at least two of these remain highly relevant to this project

“First she has a tradition and a philosophy familiar with the meaning of creative destruction.

Second She need not make all the mistakes others have made in the transition.

Third Her immediate problems are well defined : food, shelter, distribution, population”

The report to its credit had astutely laid the groundwork for where the Indian design movement should start. The National Institute of Design was conceptualized to spearhead this 20th century renaissance and to help a country that almost entirely missed the industrial revolution, come to terms with a modern global aesthetic and utilitarian outlook towards all skill based manufacturing. In the almost 70 years since the India report, the institute has helped the culture discover an identity through design and has become for design in India, what MIT is for engineering in the world. Today NID is globally recognized as a center for multidisciplinary design education and research.

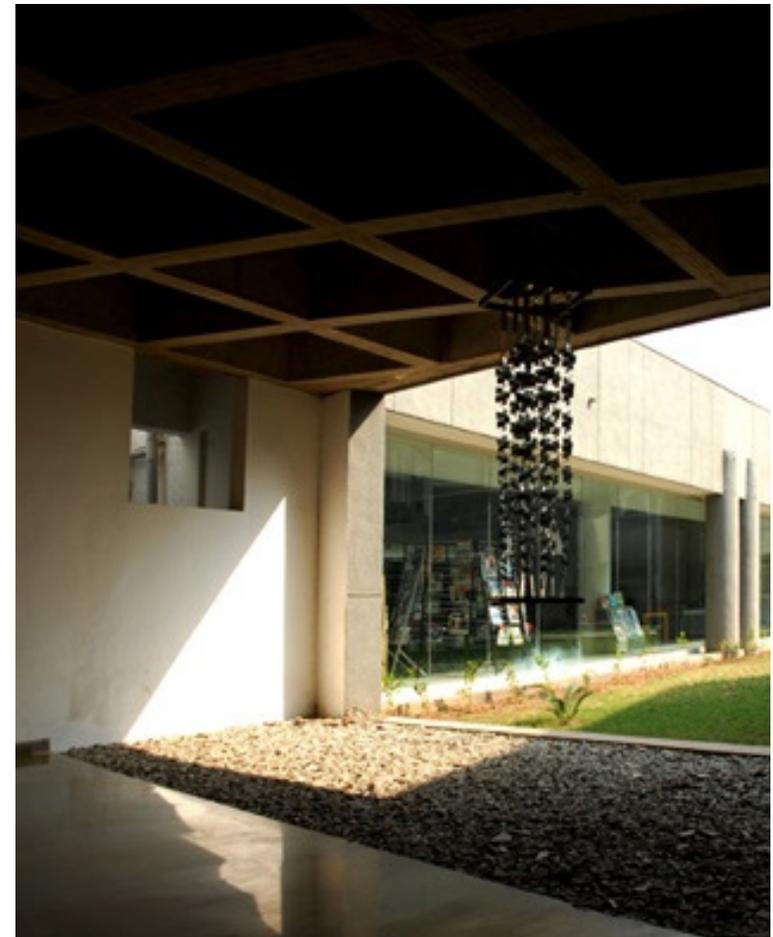
The Business Week, USA has listed NID among the top 25 European & Asian programs in the

world. The institute functions as an autonomous body under the department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India. In 2014 NID was declared an 'Institution of National Importance' in the National Institute of Design Act 2014. NID is recognized by the Dept. of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR) under Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, as a scientific and industrial design research organization.

TODAY

While a lot can be said about how the institute has grown to three campuses at Paldi, Gandhinagar and Bengaluru, with 8 disciplines for graduate and 19 disciplines for postgraduate courses, a better measure of growth of the institute and the philosophy NID represents is its capacity to evolve and update its pedagogy and understanding of design with time. We live in a world that has changed a lot since more than half a century ago. India and humanity in general faces new challenges, opportunities and global paradigms. While timeless, good design must always be a reflection of its times and hence must continuously evolve.

Over time NID has evolved from being a skill-based diploma course to a developed and rich design program. Courses in NID today focus on developing an in-depth understanding of design based thought and processes as integral parts of all deliverables (goods, services, brands, etc.) across various sectors. The program distinguishes itself by coaching young minds on human centered design approaches that can be adopted at a global scale. Students across disciplines are encouraged to understand the underlying values of the Indian design sensibilities and design solutions and interventions which manifest the same. Design at NID today is learned as a tool, a philosophy and a way of life, which is meant to add value to our present and future societies.

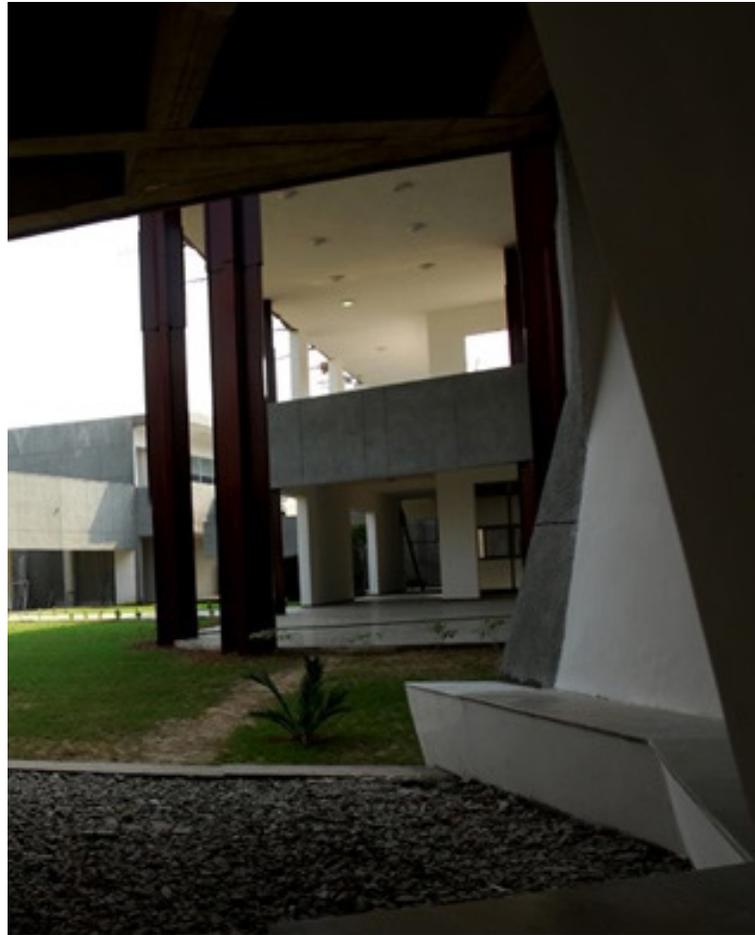


TOMORROW

A big part of the program at NID is developing the ability to look at the best things around us, in our societies and organizations, and then commit ourselves to improve them further. The pedagogy encourages questioning and rejection of the status quo, to open up perspectives into the future of everything that we live with today. To the onlooker the approach often appears oxymoronic and counter-intuitive; the best way to sustain our cultural values is to question them? But the approach embodies what we have culturally known for centuries, everything that persists through time is a product of cyclic creation and destruction.

At NID the ideal student is encouraged to be a vessel of this cycle.

Image split across: *National Institute of Design, PG Campus, Gandhinagar*, Source: www.nid.edu





Fifteen of '15, 2017
Students of the M.Des Strategic Design Management
Joining year 2015, NID PG Campus, Gandhinagar
Source: Batch collective

SDM

Strategic Design Management

The 2.5 years Masters program in Strategic Design Management was one of the first inter-disciplinary courses to be started at NID. It was also the first course of its kind anywhere in the world. It marks a critical juncture in both time and philosophy for the institute. India was riding off the high of the IT-sector boom of the 90s, many big Indian organizations were coming of age, now recognized as global players and were faced with new cultural challenges of managing visions, identities, structures, challenges and global workforces across different timezones. India had emerged as a global service giant and was beginning to face problems in the sector similar to the ones we had in 1960s with manufacturing. The quality of our products, services, methodologies were gaining a reputation of being cheap rather than cost-efficient. However at a time when technological growth was almost supersonic, the masses were too enthralled with the fresh possibilities, to fairly evaluate the experiences they were being offered. The global impact of India continued to grow.

She need not make all the mistakes others have made in the transition.

Bright minds at NID foresaw what the world would notice over the next decade. Our life was being driven by the mechanistic organizational cogs perfected in the western world in the 80s. Businesses were chasing technological achievement in times where there was no certainty of technology being a differentiator the next day. Consumers were becoming oblivious to the concept of brand loyalty (the iPhone was launched in 2007). Globally, traditional business mantras were being defied by new companies everyday.

Organizations were headed towards times of confusion and ambiguity. The world was becoming volatile and uncertain. NID realized that the time was ripe for design to intervene and SDM was conceptualized.

SDM as a course and as an ideology promotes a spontaneous and human approach to solving all kinds of business, design and life problems. It nurtures in its students the ability to create opportunity out of the ambiguous, tangibility out of the intangible and create worth and wealth

Since then SDM has been cultivating troubleshooters, care-givers, and tomorrow-makers.

out of the constraints. It tries to nurture inclusive and holistic growth in professionals towards maximizing worth and dignity rather than just revenues.

The SDM program is not a MBA program in Design or another MBA branch/specialization, nor is it meant to manage designers and design projects. SDM is about redefining and redesigning management processes, strategies and leadership paradigms through strategic design interventions. The SDM program seeks to use, embed and innovatively apply the design based creative, empathic, integrative, systemic, synergetic, holistic and human centric skills and approaches to business, organizational and management processes, tools and techniques to make them more efficient, effective and efficacious. The SDM program envisages creating professionals who are whole brained and balanced in the heart, head and hands and thereby have the ability to understand and lead through serving.

By the end of this program, the students gain adequate competence enabling them to understand and map the opportunities and design transformational strategies, manage innovation and new business development in any of all the diverse sectors of their choices. They will always provide insightful contributions at the top management functions either as team players or as team leaders or even as start-ups founders.

“Learnversations” 2017

Classes in and as conversations with the SDM family

Source: Batch collective



THE ACCIDENT

How did the project come about?

REDEFINE HACKATHAON 2017 + STARTUP WEEKEND GN

The post graduate campus of NID Gandhinagar is fortuitously located quite close to DAIICT and PDPU, two of the largest and the most academic campuses of Gujarat. Apart from them, the PG campus is not far from IIT Gandhinagar, Gujarat National Law University and NIRMA University either. We even have NIFT Gandhinagar campus literally across the street from us. Having spent almost three semesters of our Master's program within the confines of the NID campus, and with the prospect of my time as a student coming to an end, panic set in and I started to step out of the virtual boundaries of NID as an institute.

Two of these journeys took me to inter college events organized at Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology (DAIICT) Gandhinagar, and Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) for inter college competitions. The Redefine Hackathon is organized jointly by The Microsoft Club at DAIICT and iCreate. Startup Weekends are conducted by Techstars in Association with Google for Entrepreneurs. At the PDPU campus their Innovation and Incubation Center (IIC) was involved in organizing the event, which would also give me a chance to network with people who shared my interest of entrepreneurship and startups.

I decided to participate in both.

UNLIKELY PARTNERS

Once outside my mental boundaries, I was joined by fellow NIDians Arnav Sameer and Prasanth Putchala from New Media Design on my quest. When working on our entries for these competitions we realized how little we knew about things that were not design related, and how we had let over an year pass without trying to engage with the multicultural and multidisciplinary crowd around us.

We'd live in the vicinity of engineering colleges, multi-department universities, national law colleges and other design schools, yet we had never before interacted and exchanged experiences with them. What was more, the feeling was mutual and we saw their students reciprocate our interest, admiration and value for their knowledge and skills. We really enjoyed learning new things from our peers thanks to these outings and the seeds of an idea were sown.

Deep within each of the three of us the regrets and repressed feelings of dissatisfaction with our education (we were all from “good” schools) found an outlet in this new open learning paradigm and we started learning every possible thing we could. We realized that we were not the only ones who would need or benefit if such exchanges were regular. Overnight we revamped our entries to the Startup Weekend Competition (our previous entry at DAIICT was a collaboration platform as well) and presented a concept for a new learning system.

We ended up winning the first prize at both the events. I felt the concept needed more work. To be sure that it was no fluke, an extensive study was needed. Maybe someday, this vision could become a reality. Maybe we could redefine how we learn.

CONCEPTION

Brief and Scope of the Project

PREMISE

There have been various systems of learning and education throughout human history. From the ancient gurukul system that has been our cultural pride, to the post colonial institutionalized education system which is widely prevalent today, each system has had its merits and drawbacks. With access to technology and the internet becoming widespread, the last decade has seen a new learning system namely Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become prevalent[1]. There are several providers for these platforms and a lot of them offer their services for free. Learning and education have thus moved beyond institutional boundaries. However, to a great extent they are still reliant on these providers for content hosting, quality and access.

For a truly democratized format of learning peer-to-peer value delivery could potentially be very effective for learning. In-person learning experiences outrank any other methods of learning by far[2]. A great number of people with varied academic and extracurricular interests reside in geographically close communities. Such communities exist in almost every city across India, which houses education institutions, large companies and a cosmopolitan mix of people. These people represent a diverse and thriving resource pool of knowledge. However, despite their geographical closeness, these resource pools seldom interact intellectually. A vast source of knowledge around us is going untapped.

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to understand the socio-cultural paradigms that prevent this knowledge exchange and explore methods of addressing them. The intention is to be able to conduct a comprehensive exercise in social design, to explore if the potential of this peer-based knowledge pool, can be effectively tapped through technology, to redefine the paradigms of learning and knowledge exchange.

AIMS

- To study the social, professional and behavioral acceptance of localized peer-based learning and add value to the experience.
- To explore the feasibility of smartphone and mobile internet based interface as a value channel for a learning service
- To identify opportunities for monetization and development of a business model around peer-based learning.

GAPS

- Personalized and flexible virtual learning experiences are difficult to find.
- Content has been prioritized over delivering live in-person knowledge exchange
- Localized resource pools of knowledge go untapped because of lack of accessibility, information and connectivity.
- Traditional methods of learning require extended time and monetary commitments.

July - August

Project Planning
Secondary Research
Research Framework

October-November

Finish the Design of solution
Observations from Testing
Understanding the
Implications
Finish Documentation

August-September

Developing Research Methods
Conducting Primary Research
Analysis of Findings

September - October

Design of Concept
Development of Solution
Refining the Product
Testing With User Groups

OPPORTUNITY

To redefine how and from whom we can learn, and make knowledge available freely outside institutional or provider-driven boundaries through a personal connect.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Observation and planning	(1 week)
Secondary research and generating structured data	(1 weeks)
Designing Research methodologies, pilot study and relevant collateral	(4 weeks)
Primary Research through pilot (alpha user group)	(4 weeks)
Strategic Evaluation of Pilot Study	(3 weeks)
Designing conceptual and execution framework	(3 weeks)
Documentation and presentations.	(parallel)
Total Time Required:	16 weeks