

Best Practices #2 at BNCA

Choice based studio system

The education of Architecture is centered on the Design studio. Design studios are integrative in the sense that it is a course where all the subjects and skills learnt have to be applied to solve a design problem. This pedagogy is known generally as 'problem solving' and specifically as 'creative problem solving'. The design studio is also learner centered and reactive in the sense that studio facilitators react to the design solutions being worked upon by the students. Student's internal motivation plays a large role in how much learning happens for the individual student. In order to improve student engagement, BNCA has started offering choices to the students, in which they can select the design studio that best meets their learning goals. Objectives and Underlying principals

To improve student engagement

To facilitate students in meeting their learning goals

To promote interaction among peers To make for an enjoyable institutional learning atmosphere

Context

It has been long recognized that adult education needs to shift focus from 'teaching' to 'learning'. The learning needs to be more and more controlled by the student herself. A distinct shift from teacher regulated systems to student or rather 'self' regulated learning. The role of teachers and institutes in this context is to provide for a meaningful learning environment. Learning becomes meaningful for students when they get to choose what to learn. Opportunity to choose design studio can help combat student apathy and also improve intrinsic motivation. At a larger level since everyone is not doing the same thing, CBDS also helps in peer sharing and learning without fear of competition. The system was introduced to fourth year students in the academic year 2018-19. It was hoped that the student cohort of fourth year would be mature enough to understand adopt and make use of the system for their benefit and give faculty feedback regarding the operationalizing of the system. Four studio choices were offered to a cohort of 160 students. Studio teams made presentations in front of all the students, who later chose the studio that they wanted to be a part of. There was a certain amount of resistance from faculty who felt that it was better to have design studio and theory subjects cohorts as same set of students. From the student's side, they faced challenges in selecting a studio. We traced the reason to the fact that students had never been in charge of their education but had always been consuming education that the university, institute and the teachers had been deciding as essential for them. The Practice although some architectural schools in India offer choices, they are generally autonomous bodies and is able to decide their own educational offerings. For an affiliated institute which is one of the many architectural schools under a University, offering choices while remaining within the ambit of university rules and regulations was a tight rope walk. The choice based system is now being implemented for second, third and fourth year students at the Institute. Preparations start as soon as previous semester ends. Faculty teams prepare design briefs which are presented in front of the students in the first week of the semester. We ensure that first and second year students attend the second year studio presentations, second and third year students attend the third year studio presentations and so on. The first year is a skill building and foundational year. And as a result they are not offered choices for the design studio. Subsequent to the presentations, students are encouraged to talk to the faculty in order to understand the studio briefs in more detail. Students fill in Google forms with the choice of studio. The forms are analyzed by the studio teams and students are admitted to the studio of their choice. The faculty team ensures that as far as possible, every student gets at least their second preference studio. Evidence of success Over the years while the system has been in place we have observed a gradual shift in the reasons for choosing the studio. Now the students choose studios based more on their interest and learning goals which we feel is a success of the system. Problems encountered and Resources required In the first year of implementation, we noticed that the students were having a hard time choosing as there was little difference in the studios offered by the faculty. We have since worked on it to make the choices

more varied with distinct differences. After every faculty presentation of studio choices, we also collect student feedback on the reasons for choosing a particular studio. In the initial year the reasons were more like 'I chose the studio because of my friend'. We started taking a small session on how to choose the studio to encourage more responsible choice making. Of late we have seen a gradual shift to reasons that are more related to inherent qualities of the studio offering. We are now thinking of having informal exit exhibitions that will showcase work of different studios for all to see.