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educational institutions : roll call time



if Under the new global economic order 'information' and 'knowledge' are the catchphrases, synonymous with the means of business. This is especially true in growing economies where the spate of activity in infrastructure predicts a demand for new skills and expertise.

INDIA'S RICH HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SPANNING OVER FIVE THOUSAND YEARS ENCOMPASSED ARTS, MATHEMATICS, THEATRE, SPIRITUALITY AND DEVELOPED AROUND THE 'GURU-SHISHYA' OR 'TEACHER-STUDENT' TRADITION. THIS SYSTEM HOWEVER, WAS CASTE-EXCLUSIVE AND MALE-DOMINATED FOR CENTURIES. ORGANIZED EDUCATION IN INDIA IS A CREATION OF THE BRITISH IN THE EARLY 1900s. Designed to involve more Indians into governance, the system was elitist with English as the medium of instruction and catered mainly to ex-pat children whose parents were stationed in India.

Post-independence, education guided by Jawaharlal Nehru's vision, became more democratic and the system brought within the purview of the government, with little private investment. The education system is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary, with specialized technical institutions and offshoots of foreign universities set up in India. However, the system suffers from enormous internal inconsistencies as Ar. Uttam C Jain, Uttam C Jain Architects & Planners, Mumbai, comments, "We have innumerable schools, colleges and other educational institutions with no facilities whatsoever. In terms of quality, there are exceptions like the IIMs and IITs, but we need to rethink the whole education system."



vidyalankar institute of technology, mumbai : planet 3 studios



Overseas institutions have already set up field offices and research centers in India to explore the possibilities of bigger investments.

Despite all this, India has the third-largest number of higher education enrolments after China and the US. While the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand are the largest exporters of education services in the world, India and China are the largest importers.

GROWTH OF RECOGNIZED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

YEARS	PRIMARY	UPPER PRIMARY	SECONDARY SR. SEC / INTER / PRE JUNIOR COLLEGES	COLLEGES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION	COLLEGES FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (ENGINEERING, TECHNICAL, ARCHITECTURE, MEDICAL & EDUCATION COLLEGES)	UNIVERSITIES / DEEMED UNIVERSITIES / INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE
2002 - 03*	651382	245274	137207	9166	2610	304
2003 - 04*	712239	262286	145962	9427	2751	304
2004 - 05*	767520	274731	152049	10377	3201	407

source : government of india

* includes institutions for post-matric courses



"Institution buildings are one of the greatest challenges in architecture, because institutions embody the highest ideals that our society upholds."

ar. bimal patel
hcp design and project management



ama, ahmedabad : hcp design and project management



institute of hotel management & catering technology
pune : ar. raju mahagaonkar



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Those who earlier attributed the dull and uninteresting look of academic institutions to the paucity of government coffers now have access to huge capital investment.

money changes everything

The pretty new face of educational structures is a reflection of the shift in perception of such structures. And the difference is money. Bimal Patel, Director, HCP Design and Project Management Pvt. Ltd., Ahmedabad, says, "Earlier what mattered was the thought inculcated inside an institution. Now the image projected by the building has become very significant."

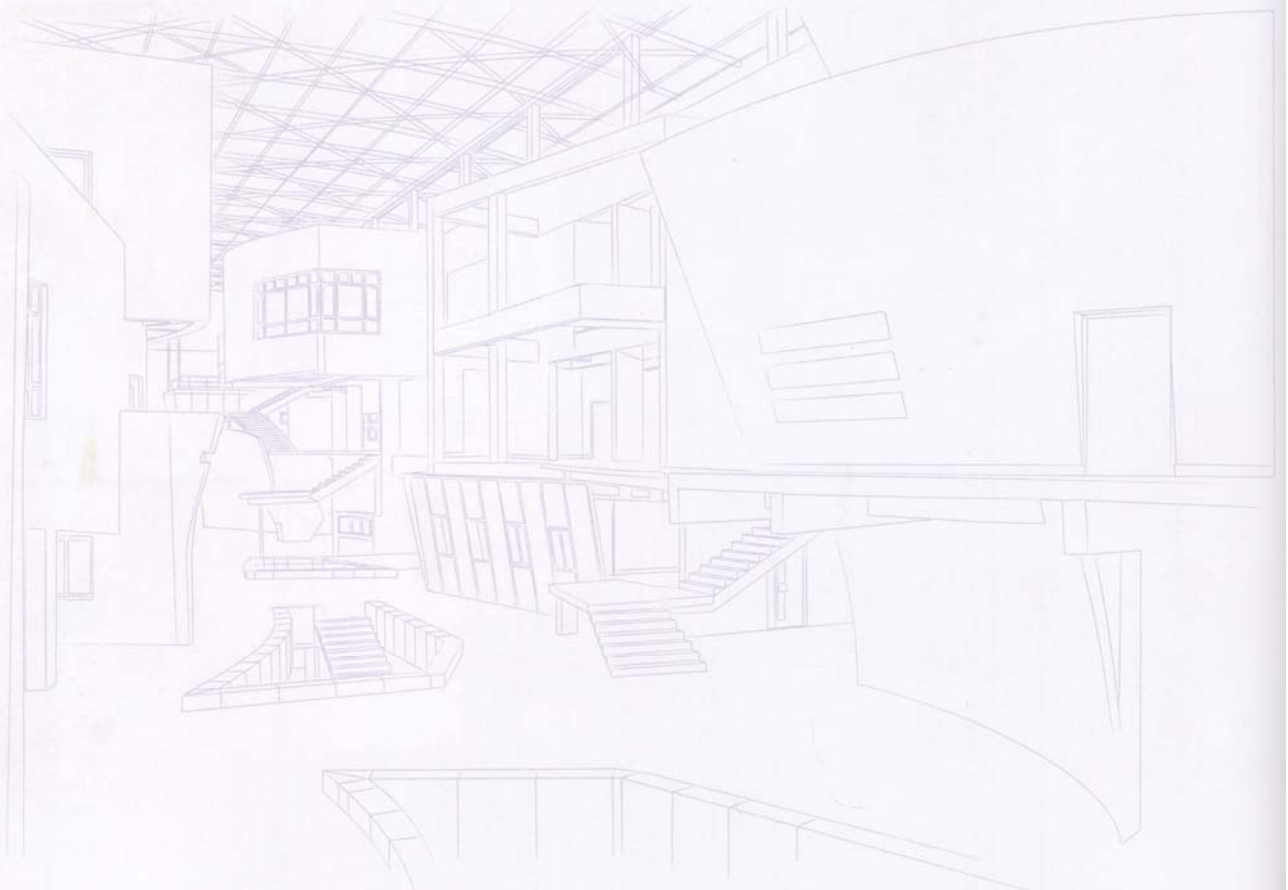
As human resource outsourcing began to unfold its massive potential, the education

system was under pressure to deliver the large pool of talent required to fuel this and has been high on the planners agenda.

In the era of globalization, the concept of patronization has acquired a commercial dimension with corporate houses and politicians pouring funds into the education business in the name of social responsibility. Ar. Nitin Killawala, Nitin Killawala and Associates, Mumbai, quips that educational institutions have an additional bonus of space,

inspiring politicians to invest. "We have more classrooms and institutes, but it's all at the cost of open spaces," he says, adding, "For example, if the Floor Space Index (FSI) is 1 in a residential building, educational institutes have a 4 FSI." Akkiseti Ramprasad Naidu, Managing Director, Christopher Charles Benninger Architects, Pune, retorts, "When I look at schools and colleges that are coming out in the name of some top politicians, there is neither good architecture nor good interiors!"

planning institutional spaces : changing perceptions



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Exquisite landscaping, mesmerizing water bodies, neat pavements and ultra-modern campuses are now a part of institutional spaces in India: indicators of a change in the perception and the attitude of promoters.

THIS IS A STORY OF CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES, NECESSITATED BY CHANGING TIMES AND DEMAND. PROMOTERS OF SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS NOW LOOK FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE AND BETTER LANDSCAPING, UTILITIES, ROADS, PAVEMENTS, DRAINAGE SYSTEMS AND MUCH MORE. FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDED IN INSTITUTIONS OVERSEAS SEEM TO HAVE spurred on their Indian counterparts. "To bring in a design element to institutional spaces has not been the tradition in India at all. The very fact that promoters now want architects and interior designers to design their projects is a big step forward," says Ar. Vasudevan R Kadayalil, Chief Operating Officer, Gayathri & Namith Architects Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru.



aga khan school, mundra, gujarat : ar. uttam c jain

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open spaces for open minds

The nature of institutions, in which they involve several levels of interaction between students and teachers, as well as between students themselves, has created a need for special interaction spaces. Ar. Sanjay Kanvinde says, "Reliance on natural light, use of natural local materials, context and climate are important issues. Creation of open and stilted interaction spaces, which serve as pause points, imparts a distinctive flavor to the overall built environment." Ar. Indraneel Dutta says, "We have created bigger spaces such as atriums adjacent to the corridor, where students can hang around. We have then created lounges at the end of these spaces where students can sit down, relax or hold discussions."



ar. christopher benninger
christopher charles benninger architects

"Our philosophy is that classrooms need not be confined within four walls, so we give essentially in every school a classroom with a courtyard where students can gather and attend lectures."



thomas stephens konkani kendra, porvorim goa : mozaic design combine

The age group is one of the strongest determinants while creating open and closed spaces according to Rasik Shah, retired headmaster turned educational consultant, Mumbai, "When we think of a pre-primary school, we have to think not only of a single classroom,



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vallabh ashram, gujarat : ar. nitin killawala



vallabh ashram, gujarat : ar. nitin killawala



casa palloti, asagao goa : mozaic design combine

but also of the communication between the classrooms, a common meeting place for these children and the proper use of the corridor. A lot of activities take place within semi-open areas and outdoors." Emphasizing the importance of open spaces, he adds, "One of the most important things, which unfortunately gets lost very often, is the concept of space. Wideness also creates a sense of generosity in the students. Confined corridors don't help a child to develop."

Courtyards and corridors occupy important locations and are seen as a means of education in the modern campuses. "Courtyards offer three benefits: they can be used as interaction spaces, they help the climate within the building which is the micro climate and they help to organize spaces," says Ar. C. S. Raghuram. Landscaping, which helps create a soothing environment on campus is also increasingly becoming a part of campus architecture.

design edge™ ...

...instills aesthetics to space

continued in the next issue...



redefining spaces

Industry is getting closer to institutions and this amplified interaction has brought about a complete transformation in the quality of facilities and services. Institutions too are becoming technologically advanced as auditorium classrooms, state-of-the-art labs, digital libraries and CCTVs are becoming a part of institutional spaces.

Factors like good sound systems and projection systems too have become more significant, as corporate bigwigs often visit campus and use the auditoria as guest lecturers. Aspects like acoustics, flow and sightline are meticulously planned. Ar. Canna Patel adds, "One of the most important things in auditorium design is the functional aspect. We get our design evaluated for function and that's when people like acoustical engineers come into the picture." These concepts too are evolving and the changes are visible in design. Capt. Raj Mohindra says, "Now, promoters are looking for multi-use halls. All the chairs are stored in a room close to the hall and you can use this hall as a yoga room, gymnasium or exam centre."



casa palloti, asagao goa : mozaic design combine

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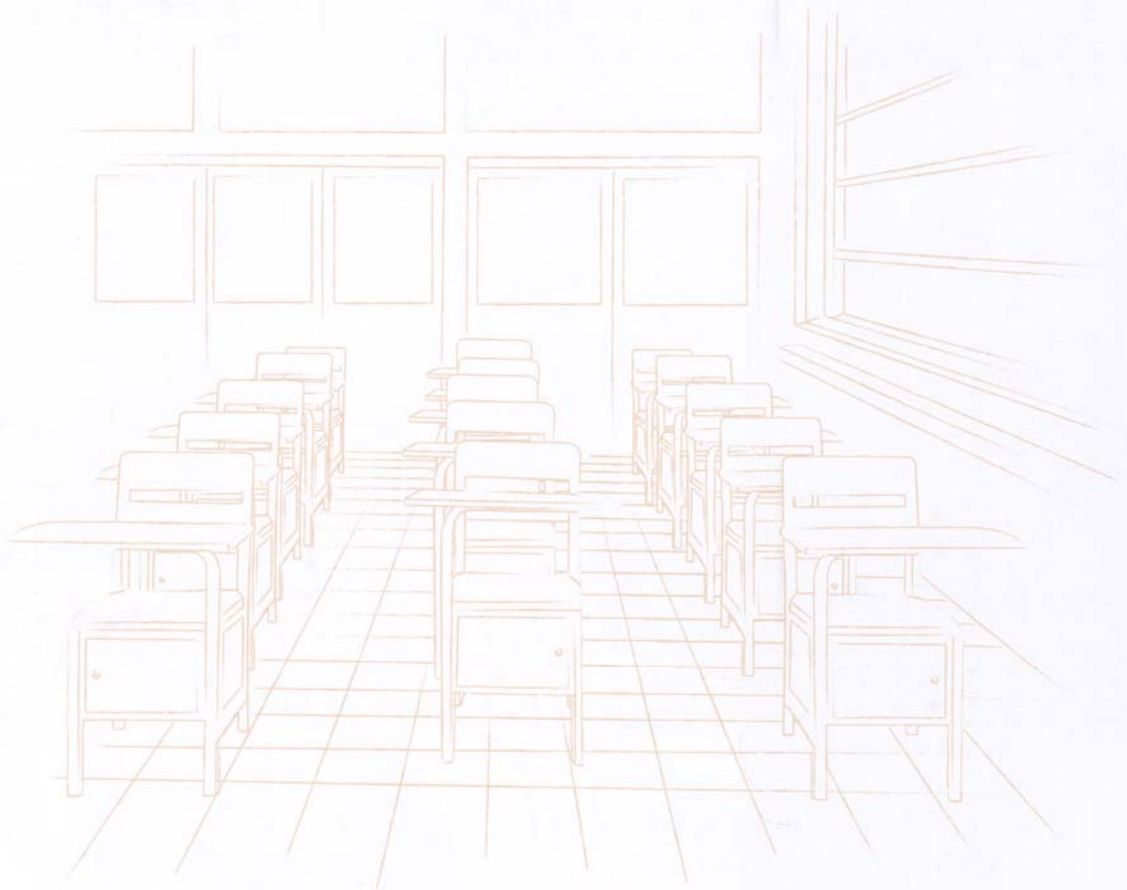


vallabh ashram, gujarat : ar. nitin killawala



institutional furniture :

beyond the bench



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The concept of school furniture remained unaltered for years despite infrastructure and facilities having undergone enormous change. This has now changed, driven by good business sense.

CURRICULA HAVE BEEN INTERNATIONALIZED. THE STRUCTURES OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES ARE NOW BEING DESIGNED AS INTERACTIVE SPACES, RATHER THAN JUST DEAD BLOCKS. EDUCATION IS NOW A BUSINESS. AND THE CHANGES STARTED HERE HAVE TRICKLED ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE CARPENTERS SAWING WOOD INTO STUDY-TABLES AND CHAIRS.

Indian schools have traditionally been fitted out with carpentry furniture; and the monopoly of this unorganized but immensely strong segment continues despite the increasing presence of ready-to-use factory-made imports. Indian manufacturers too have responded to this increasingly lucrative sector by manufacturing institutional furniture with greater design and more attractive cost components.



vidyalankar institute of technology, mumbai : planet 3 studios

Competition has increased with private enterprise, and this has translated into better facilities and infrastructure.

differing needs

Inspired by exposure to international trends in education, designing furniture for schools and colleges is a relatively new thought. Capt. Raj Mohindra, Principal Consultant & Managing Director, Raj Mohindra Consultants Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, says there's still a long way to go. "In German schools, there are small and big chairs depending on the height of the kid which are carefully designed. Most of our middle level schools have fixed benches, which are banned in the European Union because they are not ergonomic and not conducive for good education. So, a lot needs to be done as far as designing institutional furniture is concerned."

The fact that the promoters of schools are profit-driven, rather than inspired, and that everything ultimately comes with a price tag, influences what students ultimately get in classrooms. Competition has increased with private enterprise, and this has translated into better facilities and infrastructure. However, the rupee still rules many decisions. "In 80 percent of institutional projects, promoters take furniture layouts from us and get them executed by carpenters, because factory-made furniture is slightly more expensive," says Ar. Oscar Concessao, Principal Architect, O C I Architects, Chennai. While the cost connotation is better, this does not lead to better designed and finished furniture for schools and colleges.