

Making an extra effort to make the classroom a free and open space can help nurture students' creativity

According to a renowned psychologist Martin Seligman, "We have finally arrived at an era in which more creative thinking, less rote following of an order and...even more enjoyment will succeed better". However, how prepared are schools to foster creativity in students? Sir Ken Robinson, an international advisor on education stated that "All kids have tremendous talents but we squander them, pretty ruthlessly". The current education system effectively educates people out of their creative abilities.

In a study published in 2005 by Dr Sarsani and Dr Halam, Indian teachers stated that preparing students for exams (87.3%), vast syllabus (86.2%), inadequate resources at schools (80.5%) and conflicting curriculum demands (76.3%) are the obstacles encountered in fostering creativity among students. While it is evident that change at a broader level of the education system itself is required; the question is what can be done given the current situation?

Robin Fogarty in an annual conference on supervision and curriculum development in San Francisco highlighted that there are three critical attributes to develop a good learning experience; first, the art of teaching, second, the instructional methodology used and third the curricular frameworks to bind this learning experience. Therefore, even within the existing curriculum there is scope for nurturing creativity. Some areas that teachers can keep in mind are as follows:

Plan for the lecture

In order to fit the activities that complement the regular lecture based method, adequate planning must be done before the session starts. A realistic lesson plan along with appropriate activities can be designed.



■ Bulletin boards are spaces for creative expression PHOTO/HT

Build an environment to encourage curiosity among students

Foster an environment where curiosity and creativity is valued rather than rote learning. Sir Ken Robinson stated that "If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original". A classroom environment in which word-toward definitions from books are reinforced with praise and acceptance cannot foster creativity at the same time. Adequate reinforcement and encouragement for asking or writing something new must be the

norm rather than the other way around. Teachers could start a system wherein they can meet with students during a separate hour if possible, but not discourage students from asking pertinent questions and labelling them as disturbing elements'.

Encourage Peer Learning

Group activities and peer-led discussions can go a long way in helping students develop original ideas about topics present in the curriculum.

Create a creativespace

Even though resources are limited, a lot, however, can be done to create a space where new ideas can be stimulated through bulletin boards, spaces for students to display their creative skills, putting up information about their recent achievements or their future goals and beliefs. These activities should not be merely limited to the pre-school level. The need to create individualised and unorthodox spaces has been recognized by technology giants such as Google, Apple and Microsoft. As early as in 1958 the formative book, *The Poetics of Space*, highlighted the power of surroundings in influencing our mind.

Foster Divergent Thinking

What can a pen be used for? Definitely writing, but also to open the sim slot of an iphone. Divergent thinking forms an important part of creativity and

problem solving. Giving homework that utilises such thinking skills instead of a routine assignment would help students not only understand concepts better but also train them to 'think' out of the box rather than just accept what is the norm.

Recognise that each child is unique

Research has noted that external motivation in the form of competition and comparison often discourages creativity. Recognising and acknowledging each student's unique talents can help build self-esteem.

Teachers must be updated

Keep a tab on recent updates related to resources, institutions, scholarships or even events that can help students get field exposure to explore unique interests.

Sessions for brainstorming

Take time out in class to discuss the interests, views and goals of the students. Going that extra mile will help develop an environment where students can express themselves freely.

Foster your own creativity

To help bring out the creativity in students, teachers themselves must be creative.

■ Jindal Institute of Behavioral Science

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