

Education for Creativity : A Global Issue*

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The Context

As we enter the space age, the latest news is that America is going to build another New York in space. This is enough evidence of the development of man's mind and his technological progress. But it is really a matter of great pity that even this great material progress has not made this world a happier place to live in. The world of today is passing through a crucial phase of its history. The threat of an atomic war capable of destroying the planet, unlimited population growth, serious ecological risks and energy crisis are forcing mankind to think of some new alternatives for survival. Due to the scientific and technological advancement the world is changing so rapidly that to keep pace with this rate of change seems difficult to us. Alvin Toffler is afraid that this rate of change may become so great that we may experience a state of future shock—"the dizzying disorganization brought on by the pre-mature arrival of the future. This situation is coming in almost all the countries of the world. The developed countries are much ahead but the developing countries are also following them. As we foresee the future, there seems to be a constant threat to the world peace. It is ironic that we can spend billions of dollars to send men to the moon and back and yet allow more pressing problems here on earth to go relatively unattended.

The concept of global education which changed its objective from international understanding to global awareness cannot help us to solve our world problems. Just as self-hypnotism has not enabled man to project himself into space we can not solve the problems by just knowing about them. We will have to think of their solution creatively. It is in this context that children's creativity must be given prime importance in education. It is all the more important when we find that education itself is facing numerous crisis like mass-illiteracy and wastage and stagnation, specially in developing countries, resulting in a great loss of creative potential every year. Not only this, education imparted in our Schools and Colleges has become a non-creative process, thereby producing men and women with passive personality. The question to be considered in this paper is just what role creativity has or can have in the process of education in the context of world problems in general and education in particular. This is a global issue which is to be thought of seriously.

Education for Creativity : The Importance

Behind all of our progress and the problems created out of that, there have been people who had the 'Wonderful gift of creativity' in abundance. It is this creativity which has put us into trouble now and the same can save us from the future dangers also.

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The world's energy resources may be limited, but the possibilities of human brain are certainly not. The creative spark of the human brain is more important than oil. The creative potential of the individuals, needs special consideration particularly in the present situation when the scientific and technological culture demands less of man's physical energy and more of his creative ideational process. Nowadays man is finding that more and more routine tasks are being taken away from him by automated procedures. There seems to be few tasks which computers can not or will not soon be able to do faster and better than human beings. In a computer dominated age, creativity is the only saviour of human beings. We need the creative persons with vision who could boldly face the problems and find solutions to the challenges.

Developing countries are not able to make satisfactory progress not because they don't have the natural resources but because they are unable to tap the precious creative potential of their human resources. It has generally been realised today by all nations that their survival and progress will eventually depend upon how effectively they can conserve and utilize their most precious human potential—their creative children. The relevance of this remark can not be underestimated especially when it is observed that developing countries are confronted with problems like mass-illiteracy and wastage and stagnation in education. Besides this, creativity is of utmost importance to the individual itself. It is this release of creative potential which provides release to the blocked mental energy and thus leads a man for a sound mental health. It is a step towards the self-actualization and self-satisfaction. The blockage of creativity may lead to mental tension and confusion in children. Carl Rogers is right to remark here that "if creativity is not encouraged, the lights may go out, there may be individual mal-adjustment and group tensions as well as international annihilation".

In fact historical records provide enough evidence that cultures have collapsed because of the failure to utilize the intelligent and imaginative methods for solving their prob-

lems. Specially, in an under developed country, the nation's emerging problems can be to a greater extent easily and economically solved, if the country's creative power inherited in its children is brought to the forefront. A developing country like ours needs persons endowed with creativity, persons who can think of solutions to the varied problems baffling the country in particular and world in general. Education for creativity can play a vital role in this direction.

Present Position in the Schools

But the kind of education that we have been providing is just opposite. One of the most justifiable charges that can be labelled against the present educational system is that it has neglected and all too often suppressed, the natural creativity of the young. Education in our society is almost systematized and routinized at all levels from primary to the University. It has encouraged and has been encouraging listless passivity and rote meory. It is generally seen that our school programmes are not giving due place to the educational experiences and proper environment which are conducive to the development of creative potential. This tragedy is beyond description.

Do our schools in any way encourage the creative potential to flourish? Do we attach any importance to creativity in our school programme today? Our selection system, curriculum, methods of teaching, instructional strategies and text books are not in consonance with the development of this ultimate human asset. Highly regimented examination system and expectations of parents and teachers are killing the very spark of creativity in children. The whole school curriculum is geared to success rather than to achievement for its own sake. All this leads to what researchers call the "Other directed personality" with emphasis on immediate action and short term goals. Probably the urge to enquire, to invent, to solve is stifled in the millions of school children resulting in the death of the creative spark. This is exactly what's happening in most of our schools today. There is therefore, a need to re-examine, remodel or drastically change, if necessary, our existing school programmes,

if we want to solve the various problems with which the today's world is confronted. The pendulum must swing from non-creative and anti-creative education to creative education.

How Does Creativity Work ?

To the question, what is creativity ? Psychologists give different answers. A fully loaded lorry got stuck under a low bridge. It could go neither forward nor back. Soon a large crowd collected, shouting instructions to the driver : 'dig the road', 'cut the bridge', 'unload the lorry' and so on. Then a small boy suggested : 'why not deflate the tyres a little ?' The lorry settling a little lower on its slightly deflated tyres was driven away. So this is how creativity works. In the face of such a problem, we naturally tend to concentrate on the road, the roof of the bridge and the load, which are responsible for the obstruction. Looking at a problem, from an entirely different angle to solve it is creative thinking.

What Can Education Do ?

It has been agreed upon by all psychologists and educationists that potentially all children are creative. While there seems to be agreement on its existence, there is evidence that creative potential of school children is not being tapped and the level of creativity that they express falls far short of what they are potentially capable of. It's a pity that children are not given opportunities in schools to develop their creative potential. They are kept busy in routine work and any deviation of theirs is often threatened. Children must be given time to do nothing, to fantasize, day dream and pursue interests which may have no relation to their school work. Curiosity and opinions which are divergent should be encouraged instead of condemned. Once a little boy of class V put a question to a geography teacher : 'Sir, if the earth rotated from east to west and revolved round the sun in an anticlock direction, would we have our time, days in week, months in the year and the seasons in the reverse order ?' Teacher got angry and replied with frown, 'what's a silly question ? How is it possible ?' So this is the situation

in our schools. How can we expect the flourishing of creativity in children under such circumstances ? It's true that nothing is created and so with the creativity. Schools can not create creativity but they can do much to promote its development. The statement by Parnes and Meadows (1963) seems to be relevant here that the gap between an individual's innate creative talent and his actual creative output can be narrowed by deliberate education in creative thinking".

Education for creativity should be the top-most aim of education at different levels of education and it should strive to see that the class rooms are not just meant for one way transmission of knowledge for students to passively accumulate, but are the centres where each and every student in his own way can satisfy his curiosity, develop his abilities and talents and pursue his interests to his best advantage. In fact, each school and class-room should have open access to curiosity, should encourage children to go dashing off in new direction and expose them to questioning and exploration. The teacher should be interested in seeing the students as self-actualizing and self-initiating learners, as exploring problems, analyzing data and finding solutions.

While talking on creativity one should not go to the absurd extent of claiming that each and every student can be a Newton or Shakespeare, but what every teacher can confidently claim is that potential for creativity exists in every one and only awaits the proper atmosphere where each and everyone can sprout and be nurtured to the fullest development. Through education, we should be able to kindle that spark of creativity in every child which would make the task of learning more exciting and more meaningful. When the child comes to the school, we have to see whether there is something in the classroom which stifles his creativity, if there is such a thing we have to remove it. On the positive side, we have to create a classroom environment which will be conducive to the development of creativity and this can be done by providing enough freedom to the children. We generally see that there is a

tendency on the part of the teacher to stifle creativity at every stage by always trying to correct the child which naturally discourages him. Under such a situation whatever creativity the child possesses is stifled.

Development of creativity is all the more important in the present situation when the world is facing numerous problems as already mentioned. Children should be encouraged to initiate and actively participate in the present problems of the world and their unique responses should be critically evaluated. Their imaginative capacity should be developed by giving them opportunities to express their view on future consequences of a certain problem of their daily life of the world as a whole. For this, schools of the future are to be designed not only for learning but for thinking creatively. The future schools will be asked to produce men and women who can think, who can adapt to change and maintain sanity in this age of acceleration. This is the creative challenge to education. By educating for creative

behaviour, perhaps we can provide to the world a place with less problems and more peace. The creative students in our schools have a tremendous role to play in the history of the future, let us become wiser in giving the preparation they need in the schools of the present.

Conclusion

This paper has just stressed the importance of creativity in education as a solution for world problems in general and education in particular. The discoveries and innovation of the next 20 years will probably make the previous 100 years seem to have progressed at a snail's pace. Therefore, a person can not foresee exactly that knowledge he will need five or ten years from now to meet various problems. He can, however, develop the attitude and abilities that will help him meet any future problem creatively and inventively. Let us hope that our education undergo a change towards creative education as we race towards 2000 A.D.