

Curriculum Shelter for 'Creative pursuits'

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Many Schools today offer 'Art and Craft' classes and workshops up to 7th Standard. Children enjoy these activities. From 8th to 12th standard, the time offered to such activities comes down varying from school to school. Time allotted manifests as many activities like trekking, field visits, camps, seeing exhibitions, etc.,. No doubt these give a relief to children from the tedious class work in the regular subjects and they enjoy these engagements!

All these schools never seem to recognize a child as an 'individual'. Child at 12 or 13 is in a crucial stage of self-development. It is the time to realize and identify oneself as well as examine one's own passions and interests in the things they learn. Some children have passion to build, some have a liking for music, some like math puzzles, some for drawing cartoons,.... and so on.

There is an urgent need to nurture such individual interests at this age. Studying, practicing, building things of one's own choice can give tremendous boost to one's confidence and personality-growth. These can be put into a basket called 'Creative pursuits'. The performance in school subjects can also improve once they are able to connect them to their creative pursuits. One may say there are 'Sundays and other Holidays' for children to do what they want. But seldom this extra time gets channelized. Generally, children are lead to participate in such extra-curricular activities initiated by others during these holidays. Some ambitious parents want their children to attend as many varied packages as they can like swimming, Karate, Dance, Acting, Origami,..... Very little effort is put to find out the natural interest of a child. A friendly counseling and mentoring- support is required to identify one's real, deeper interest at this stage!

A young plant needs protection, water and little fertilizer.

A 'curriculum shelter for creative pursuits' is an idea worth adopting for any School. The curriculum shelter may offer 2 hours in 'a week or a fortnight' for mentoring. Each child can be counseled in this allotted time. Individual interests of the child may be identified by children themselves or parents and teachers who have been watching them. Real talents as against media oriented aspirations need to be identified and nurtured. Each child can be counseled and facilitated to pursue her/his choice, as individual creative pursuit 'Skill development', which gets a secondary treatment in our Education can become 'wanted-learning'! A child joyously working with hands in clay wanting to learn how to make a pot on a wheel, may be introduced to a 'ceramic designer' or see the scope of growth as ceramic artist by seeing an exhibition, meeting a serious ceramic artist or even doing a brief apprenticeship in a ceramic studio !. A child fascinated to make a basket or fish trap in bamboo can visit a bamboo cluster or Bambu studio in IIT to get a right orientation! Parents need to play a role as facilitators. An expert web help can be offered to help Parents and School teachers who seek guidance!

We can think of many pursuits and how they can be nurtured. The individual achievements may be exhibited, documented at the end of each semester and special certificates can be awarded. Children would love it.

Some parents have questions like: what happens to the 'Maths or History,' our kid is weak-at? Shouldn't we put him/her with 'a tuition teacher for extra hours?'

We need to change our attitude to so called 'subjects one is weak-at'! It happens, most of the time. that a child develops a dislike to a 'subject' at an early stage and it becomes a disliked, 'difficult subject'. A child who likes a subject is never weak in it! The child needs to discover a path to these subjects from things he or she likes to do! This is where 'creative pursuits' can have a big role to play!

A child interested in dance, and weak in 'Maths', can discover 'Maths in dance patterns' with mediation by a right guide. Even Symmetries in a group dance can be discovered by the child once he/she gets interested.

Some time back, I found sophisticated Mathematical patterns in a Kerala- Tribal dance! Children and elders who were dancing were not aware of the 'maths' in it.

The moment children are able to link the two, 'a difficult subject' and a liked 'creative pursuit' the fear of that subject vanishes! When one discovers 'excitement' in knowing a subject, he/she cannot be 'weak' in that subject any more!

Schools seem to have a worry ! Where is the time for teachers? Isn't it additional load on Teachers? Should they not out-source? Well, this may become an opportunity for "new entrepreneurs' in education !"

Let us look at the competition for entry into the IITs, NIDs, NIFTs, IIMs,.... so on. Soon scoring higher marks will no more be sufficient criterion for selection . If the difference in the top bracket is "Marginal', what would a selector look for? It will be individual initiative in the student, whether it is a design course, engineering or pharmaceutical! That is where the creative pursuits will become imperative in the mad world of competition for opportunities!

What more, youngsters who are energetic are not looking for boring industrial jobs any more. They want satisfaction and fulfillment in their jobs! This will be the demand of the day!
