

How exam-centred teaching hampers creativity in classrooms

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The Daily Star with the collaboration of the British Council has returned with its LIVE webinar series on 29 August 2022. A session titled 'How can we increase creativity in the classroom?' was aired live, which was hosted by Wendy Naylor, Consultant, The British Council. In this event, respected education practitioners discussed and shared ideas on how to boost creativity in classrooms. Creativity in education is often a subject of debate, as schools can develop a culture of routine and conformity. Often, training students to simply pass exams may discourage and inhibit originality, which is why the government is currently reviewing assessments in schools.

Ruth Bath, Teacher Trainer at The British Council, began the discussion by saying, "Creativity is about students producing and using their own ideas and accepting alternate or unusual responses rather than just a fixed idea." Nahid Ferdous Bhuiyan, Teacher Trainer at National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), followed up by stating that the two things important in creativity are the use of imagination and the original idea that helps us to make something new. "Creativity is the ability of students to transcend the ordinary," added Muhammad Jahid Reza, Lecturer at Rajshahi Cadet College. Reza emphasised that when students can transcend ordinary ideas and think out of the box, it can be defined as creativity.



In response to the question of why creativity is important, Nahid said, "Creativity is one of the most required and higher thinking order skills in the 21st century for our academia, working environment and real life." According to Ruth, the two barriers limiting creativity are correcting students constantly and not accepting alternate answers. Being specialised in training primary school teachers, Ruth added that praising students for their hard work instead of focusing on good scores encourages them to work harder in the future and be creative adults. Exam-centred teaching gives less floor to

students to ask questions. This fosters a mindset that is unable to deal with diverse challenges, leading to a lack of space for creativity, Nahid added. "The solution to remove challenges to creativity is to start a formative assessment, which the government has already started and is due to be implemented by 2025. Project-based learning can be introduced as well," said Reza.

Gautam Mazumdar, head teacher in a Fatepur government primary school said, "We always need to think out of the box to create an environment where students can think freely." He added that parents need

to accept new ways without restricting their children with conventional methods, and emphasised that simple resources like pen and paper can be used to increase creativity too. Nahid mentioned that different school and community culture and book clubs, as well as various competitions, can play a vital role in increasing creativity among students. As a former music student, Ruth added, "Having a creative background gives me the confidence as a teacher and trainer to listen to my students' ideas. There is never just one fixed way to look at such cases."

Reza shared how listening to and appreciating the ideas of his students boosts their confidence to engage in thinking more. "Creativity and English language teaching go hand in hand. While practising creativity, students can improve their English language or vice versa. While learning vocabulary and grammar, they need to use their creativity to make sentences and to practise more," advised Nahid when talking about how to increase creativity in classes.

Ruth mentioned an important point, that not having an updated education system or syllabus is not a Bangladesh-exclusive issue. Such limitations exist globally. However, the proposed government changes to the exam system are a welcome move with the potential to support teachers to open up more, accept alternate answers and work to develop the traditional system.

Where to learn new languages in Bangladesh

TAHSEEN NOWER PRACHI

A new language is not only a gateway to another culture but also a fun way to boost your skills and proficiency in academic and professional life. Let's take a look at some notable language courses available in Bangladesh.

Institute of Modern Languages (IML)
At present, the Institute offers 1-year non-degree courses in Bangla (only for foreigners), Arabic, Chinese, Korean, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Hindi. M.Phil, PhD programs, 18-months MA in ELT and short courses in various

languages are also offered.

Alliance Française de Dhaka
Alliance Française offers courses for French that conform to the CEFR. They organise 4 sessions of French courses every year, each with a duration of 3 months. There are three age groups: children (9-12), teenagers (13-15) and adults (16+).

Goethe-Institut Dhaka
The Goethe Institute offers courses aiming to teach German for both professional and study purposes. The contents of these courses are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for

Language (CEFR) and can be for exam preparation as well as intensive purposes.

Shield Language Academy Dhaka
With almost 7 years of experience in language teaching, Shield Language Academy offers courses in English, Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish and Thai. Course durations range from 14 to 4 weeks.

Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh
The Japanese Universities Alumni

Association in Bangladesh focuses on Japanese language courses that are conducted by native Japanese teachers. This language centre is supported by the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh and The Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan. It also provides counselling services to those who are interested in studying in Japan.

Wings Learning Center
Since its inception, WINGS has helped students to learn English in a professional and academic way and also assists them in developing their spoken English skills to be up to the mark for applying overseas.

