



PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract. Creativity has become one of the most coveted skills in today's ever-changing world, where the sustainability of an individual is based on his/her creative potential. The need to foster creativity and innovation has long been a priority in the educational and corporate spheres. The current research focuses on perceptions primary school teachers hold regarding creativity and its role in learning, along with the identification of the creative student. The data is collected through focus group discussion. Teachers unanimously accept the role of creativity in enhancing learning and facilitating the child's overall development. The study could be replicated in different countries, and the gap between perception and reality could be identified. This gap identification could be considered a basis for providing developmental intervention to the teachers to foster creativity among the children and formulate policy for educational management at the school level.

Keywords: creativity, creativity nurturing, focus group discussion, inquisitiveness, learning, teachers.

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1. Introduction

Creativity is instrumental in thriving, surviving, and flourishing in a dynamic, global, and highly competitive environment where obsolescence is faster than innovation (Thurlings et al., 2015). The research shows that creativity is crucial for life satisfaction and learning motivation. It is instrumental in supporting innovative behaviours and attitudes and boosting economic productivity. Creativity and innovation are critical competencies for a successful career in today's changing work-life (Muzam, 2023; Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Wagner, 2012). Today's child should be guided into a successful professional life in the future by being equipped with creative and innovative skills. Creative children can utilize, synthesize, analyze, and assess diverse ideas to develop meaningful outcomes (Stricker & Sobel, 2020; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Such children would be adept at making the right decisions and resolving problems. Therefore, the creativity potential of the child needs to be nurtured so that the future workforce would be embellished with the "creativity", which would facilitate their survival in a fiercely competitive world. In the educational setting, creativity is instrumental in the student's success by increasing personal and social engagement through learning and leads to greater student satisfaction and higher levels of self-efficacy (Ma, 2022; Smith, 2019). Teachers and school administrators are the key influencers of the school's learning

environment. They should provide a creativity fostering environment to the students, making them self-motivated, independent, strong communicators, and creative learners (Stricker & Sobel, 2020; Tan, 2015). The teachers provide creativity nurturing classroom environment by respecting the creative students and appreciating tolerance to deviance, acceptance of new ideas, and diversity of thought. Perceptions are dispositions that exhibit who we are and how we behave and act (Romo & Alfonso, 2003) and give a clue about the consequential expectation of the perceiver towards the perceived substratum (Rosenthal, 1991). Therefore, exploring teachers' perceptions about creativity would facilitate knowing the teachers' needs, beliefs, misconceptions, and prejudices, which would help establish a creativity nurturing classroom environment (Fryer, 1996; D. P. Newton & L. D. Newton, 2009). The teachers' perception of the importance of creativity for learning and also their view of the creative child would be the factor in determining their behaviour as facilitators or barriers in nurturing the creativity of the students.

The current study examines teachers' perception of creativity's role in learning and the behaviour of the creative child who exhibits the characteristics like originality, imagination, and flexibility. The available literature reflects substantial differences in the teacher's perception of creativity. Hence, to improvise the educational process and provide recourse to the creativity fostering activities to the children, it is crucial to develop an understanding of teachers' perceptions and their actions to foster creativity. The study is based in India. India is a country with the youngest population in the world. Hence, it is rational to study the creativity nurturing aspects of the child population of India, as in the times to come, they would make a significant percentage of the working professionals of the world.

2. Conceptual framework

Attribution theory and self-fulfilling prophecy are the theoretical frameworks this study is based on. Attribution theory explains, how the social perceiver uses the information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, pp. 345–354). Teachers form their perception of the creative student by attributing the child's behaviour to either the internal dispositions or external situations. Teachers' behaviour towards the creative child is based on the attribution factors, which lead to the teachers' judgment. The teacher's perception, which is reflected in their treatment of the child in the class, also affects the child's behaviour, who wants to conform to the teacher's perception and expectations (Chen et al., 2020; Brophy & Good, 1974; Rosenthal, 1974; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Jussim & Harber, 2005), making a case for self-fulfilling prophecy, which is explained as "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton, 1948). The confirming attitude of the child suppresses their creative potential. Hence, the teachers' attribution of creativity acts as a suppressor or nurturer of the creativity.

3. Literature review

The researchers have explored various facets of creativity, but the focus on teachers' perception of creativity is less explored.

3.1. Creativity

Creativity has been defined in various ways and has been debated as a trait of nature or trait of nurture. The researchers with the belief that creativity is a trait of nature defined creativity as a genetic and intelligence trait bestowed on few individuals (Esquivel, 1995; Galton, 1892; Terman, 1926), but with the further research in the area, it was discovered that creativity is not the innate trait but is possible to be developed (Kupers et al., 2018). The believers of creativity as a trait of nurture considered that it is also influenced by environment and socio-cultural aspects (Kupers et al., 2018).

Creativity is defined in varied contexts (Moran, 2010; Runco, 2007; Amabile, 1996; Feldman et al., 1994; Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). Creativity is a unique human trait that reflects their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and their effective cognitive abilities to combine and improve upon ideas to which they are exposed (Runco, 2007). Contrasting this view is the other viewpoint, which elaborates that creativity is not only cognitive but also a socio-emotional approach to learning that everybody can imbibe (Cropley, 2020). Both the above definitions consider creativity as cognitive, but they differ in their approach as the latter description includes other aspects.

Intelligence and creativity both are cognitive aspects yet different. This distinction is essential to understand, especially in this study, as teachers get prejudiced by the intelligent and conformist student and focus on him/her. Cropley (2020) explains the distinction between intelligence and creativity quips: conventional intelligence is heavily dependent on recognizing, recalling, and reapplying, and requires, among other things, substantial knowledge of facts, effective acquisition of new facts, rapid access to the contents of memory, accuracy in finding the best answer to factual questions, and logical application of the already known. On the other hand, creativity requires the production of novelty, that is, a departure from the facts, finding new ways, inventing answers, and seeing unexpected solutions.

Creativity is the most sought-after skill not only for the present but for the future also (Ritter et al., 2020; Barbot et al., 2015). The role of creativity can be observed in learning, developing life and career skills, and effective communication and collaboration (Larraz-Rábanos 2021; Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Creativity is adapted and supports divergent thinking, problem-solving, and ingenuity. Everyone has the potential to be creative, and it is considered that all children are naturally endowed with creativity (Maslow, 1968; May, 1975; Rogers, 1982; Torrance, 1987; Treffinger, 1989), so the fostering intervention makes the difference in the development of the child's cognitive behaviour.

Cropley (2020) elaborated about three stages of creativity: the pre-conventional phase (up to the age of between 6 and 8 years), the conventional phase (from age 6 to 8 years to about 10 to 12 years), and the post-conventional phase (from about 12 years of age and extending into adulthood). Pre-conventional creativity displays spontaneity and emotional involvement and may lead to aesthetically pleasing products. However, it is environmentally cued because it is dominated by perception (especially visual) of the immediate concrete environment. Hence, the current study focuses on the pre-conventional phase, and it is conspicuous that the creativity in this phase is affected by the context and perception of the environment.

3.2. Creativity and learning

Creativity is a continuous process and is a global phenomenon in the education arena. The connection between the creativity and education is extensively studied (Chen et al., 2020; Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007) and has been quoted in Cropley (2020): in educational settings, creativity is seen as a special approach to learning that involves both “creative” teaching and “creative” learning strategies. These strategies facilitate learning and are simultaneously a result of appropriate teaching and learning. The developmental aspect of creativity seeks the role of the educational institutions to nurture the creativity and the creativity potential of the individuals. Economic development requires the development of human capital to apply creativity to knowledge. The educational institutes, especially the schools, are the long-term source of human capital development. The students need to be prepared to deal with the challenges and changes and develop thinking outside the box (Fisher, 2004).

Creativity is one of the critical factors that steer civilization forward (Ritter et al., 2020; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). The societal stakeholders like educators, parents, employers, and policy-makers ensure that creativity would help humankind address future problems, including education, health care, the environment, and the economy (Stricker & Sobel, 2020; Moran, 2010). The literature exhibits the linkages of creativity and society and education, emphasizing the importance of creativity-fostering behaviours of the socializing and educating agents.

When teachers encourage creativity in the classroom, the cognitive aspects like reasoning, memory, problem solving, *etc.* of students are improved, leading to better learning and personal development (Ma, 2022; Guilford, 1967; Isaksen & Treffinger, 2004; Karpova et al., 2011; Moran, 2010; Torrance, 1963).

Creativity facilitates effective learning (Banko-Bal & Guler-Yildiz, 2021; Craft et al., 2007). Teaching for creativity requires ways of teaching which stimulate creative thinking and behaviour in the students. The creativity-nurturing behaviour of the teachers is essential for developing creativity in the students (Soh, 2000). The teacher's ability to identify the student's creative potential is a critical factor in nurturing creativity (Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007). Cayirdag (2016) posits, that “environmental conditions and support could impede transformation of creative potential to creative achievement”. The environment, which provides opportunities, can nurture creativity (Runco & Acar, 2010; Ka-yee Leung et al., 2008). The difference in the school environment is evident in state and private schools in India, and it affects the creativity nurturing of the state school students adversely due to lack of opportunities, infrastructure, and motivation (Tasaduq & Azim, 2012). So, it is rational to test the hypothesis regarding the difference between the creativity nurturing behaviour of teachers based on their affiliation with state or private schools.

3.3. Characteristics of the creative individual

The characteristics of the creative individual have been studied by different researchers (Torrance, 2009; Sternberg, 1985; Fryer & Collings, 1991; Williams, 1994; Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999). Torrance (2009) and Fryer and Collings (1991) specifically explored teachers' perception of the personality disposition of the creative student, whereas Sternberg (1985) collected the

perception of different people like teachers, students, and business professionals, regarding their notion of creativity. Their research yielded intelligence, achievement motivation, divergent thinking, risk-taking, imagination, originality, self-expression, self-confidence, ability to set own goals, autonomy, independence of thought and action, and critical thinking ability as characteristics of the creative individual. Williams (1994) model divided creativity into affective and cognitive factors. Affective factors include curiosity, risk-taking, complexity, imagination, fluency (generation of a large number of ideas), flexibility (changing ideas), originality (unique ideas), and elaboration (elaborate and enrich ideas) as the cognitive factors. Divergent thinking has been believed to be the best predictor of creative performance (Thakral et al., 2021; Kirton, 2003; Runco, 1986, 1992; Lubart & Sternberg, 1997).

3.4. Teacher perceptions and creativity

Many researchers have studied teachers' creativity nurturing behaviours (Banko-Bal & Guler-Yildiz, 2021; Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005; Bamburg, 1994; Runco & Johnson, 2002; Saracho, 2012; Scott, 1999). The researchers have also examined the influential nature of teachers' perceptions of creativity and the role of standardized testing in the classroom, and its effects on teachers' ability to nurture creative and divergent thought.

Rosenthal (1974) propounded a four-factor theory describing the differential behaviour of teachers towards the students based on the perception of the students' potential. Teachers' implicit theories of creativity imply conscious and subconscious expectations and thoughts teachers about the traits of the students' creative potential (Runco & Johnson, 2002; Saracho, 2012). Based on the perception, teachers build the different expectations from different students and hence provide specific feedback and support to the students (Thakral et al., 2021; Rosenthal, 1974; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Chaikin et al., 1974; Rist, 1970; Rubovits & Maehr, 1973; Brophy & Good, 1970; Cooper, 1979; Finn, 1972; Weinstein, 1976; Cooper & Good, 1983).

Some authors (Kurtz et al., 1990) argue that teachers influence cognitive development and school achievement through explicit strategy instruction and overt and subtle messages about their perceptions of children's abilities and their attribution theories about other factors that influence achievement. Although most teachers favour creativity and announce the benefit of creative exploration in practice, they resist their students' creative efforts and behaviours (Runco & Johnson, 2002; Scott, 1999; Westby & Dawson, 1995). The gap between perception and practice makes the situation even more complex as despite knowing the importance of creative behaviour, the teachers would not encourage creative acts in the classroom. It is essential to know the perception and practices followed by the teachers in the classroom to understand the dissonance between perception and teachers' classroom behaviour.

4. Research design and methodology

The sample was drawn from 116 school teachers in India from different private (80) and state schools (36) who have experience teaching in a class strength of as low as 20 to as high as 100. The sample consists of 51 teachers with more than 15 years of experience and

65 teachers with less than 15 years of work experience. Eighty-four teachers were female, and thirty-two were male. The age of the sample ranges from 25 to 58.

4.1. Descriptive characteristics of respondents

The participants are the primary school teachers associated with the schools affiliated with the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, Indian Certificate Secondary Education, Central Board of Secondary Education, and the state board schools like Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education. The sample is both from private as well as state schools.

4.2. Research questions

There are two research questions:

1. Does creativity makes a difference in learning? What is the role of creativity in learning?
2. How do teachers identify the creative students? What kind of behaviour does the creative student exhibit?

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Participation

Focus group discussions (FGDs) of teachers for understanding the role of creativity in learning and creative student behaviour were conducted. Four FGDs were conducted for the study. Each group consisted of 10–12 teachers based on the earlier research (Fern, 1982; Mendes de Almeida, 1980; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Oxfam, 2019). The first group consisted of teachers with experience of more than 15 years in private schools. The second group also had teachers with experience of more than 15 years in state schools. The third and fourth groups had teachers with experience of fewer than 15 years in private schools and state schools, respectively.

4.3.2. Data collection

The FGDs were conducted by four people who included both the authors and two research assistants. One of the authors facilitated the discussion. She began with the introduction of the topic of discussion and the research objectives. The facilitator guided the discussion and posed the open-ended questions to the group. The facilitator tried to elicit responses when the group members did not initiate the discussion. One of the teaching assistants audio-recorded the discussion, and the other research assistant took the discussions' field notes. The audio-recording and field notes provided the data for analysis.

4.3.3. Data analysis

The recordings were transcribed, and a code sheet was prepared to analyze the response of the data collected. The authors read the transcripts and listed the codes and the themes for further analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the individual listing, each code and theme were discussed, and only codes and themes, which were consensually accepted, were considered for further analysis. *QDA Miner* lite software was used to assist in manually sorting,

grouping, and coding relevant elements of the participants' transcripts and the assistant's notes. Results were shared with the respective groups to ensure objectivity and clarity in the final results, and the views gathered.

The recordings were transcribed, and a code sheet was prepared to analyze the response of the data received. Results were shared with the respective groups to ensure objectivity and clarity in the final results.

5. Research findings: analysis of focussed group discussion

A FGD was conducted to collect the data. All the participants unanimously accepted that being creative makes a difference, and they perceived the decisive role of creativity in learning. The data was analyzed based on qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify, analyze, and report dominant themes in the teachers' statements. Accordingly, the data was divided into three themes, as shown in Table 1: impact of creativity on learning, characteristics of creative students, and identification mechanism:

- Impact of creativity on learning theme, the teachers described the role of creativity in learning and described creativity as the process that enhances the educational process and cognitive development and improvises behavioural aspects;

Table 1. Definition of themes (source: created by authors)

No.	Themes	Definitions
1.	Impact of creativity on learning	Statements in which teachers have described the role of creativity in learning and have described creativity as the process that enhance the educational process, cognitive development, and improvises behavioural aspect.
2.	Characteristics of creative students	Statements in which teachers elaborate about their perception of creative students as the pupil exhibiting characteristics like curiosity, confidence, and how such students process the information, <i>e.g.</i> , class participation.
3.	Identification mechanism	Statement in which teachers discuss how do they distinguish between the creative and the other children, <i>e.g.</i> , assignments, the way.

- Under characteristics of a creative students, teachers elaborated on their perception of creative students as the pupil exhibiting characteristics like curiosity, confidence, and ability to process the information during class participation;
- The mechanism of identifying the creative student was elaborated under the theme identification mechanism, where they discussed how they differentiated between creative and non-creative children.

Based on the responses, themes were divided into sub-themes. Under impact of creativity on learning, the responses were divided into the following sub-themes: enhance educational process, cognitive development, and behavioural aspect:

- Educational process: teachers believed that creativity strengthens the educational process by making learning easy and implementing practical, application-based learning, which was expressed in the responses like "development of mind", "guide students", "indulges student in practical aspects", "focus on application-oriented knowledge";

- Role of creativity in cognitive development: the role of creativity in students' cognitive development was discussed as freedom for deep thought, thinking outside the box, inquisitive, imagination, developing thinking process, questioning, and problem-solving. The teachers expressed this in their responses like "stimulate deep-thinking", "encourage the development of new ideas", "gives new vision", "enables the student to come out of the comfort zone and innovate", "develop students' thinking ability";
- Behavioural dispositions: creativity was also considered to affect behavioural dispositions like judging and the child's overall development. The teachers believed that creativity "gives them perspective to judge", "brings out the student's talent", "personal development", "promotes emotional, physical, and social development", "develop skills of fluency and flexibility", "overall development of child".

The characteristics of creative students were discussed under mannerism and action:

- Mannerism: the teachers mentioned that they identify the creative students based on "how they behave" and "how they act", and discussed the characteristics of a creative child as "standing different from the crowd", "confident", "initiative taking", "eagerness to learn", "share different ideas", "enthusiastic", "curious", "outgoing";
- Action: The participants pointed toward the specific ways the creative child acts like "think logically", "questioning", "inquisitive", "active in activities", "class participation and discussion".

The identification mechanism is further divided into observation, assignment, and participation:

- Observation: the teachers discussed that they identify the creative child by their behaviour and mannerism. They "think differently", "ask challenging questions", "express themselves";
- Participation: class participation, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities were also pointed out in the discussion on the identification mechanism. They were identified during class participation as the teachers reported that they "always bring in a different perspective" and volunteer for the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities as they "participate in other activities";
- Assignment: the other way of identifying the creative child, as reflected in the discussion, was assignments. These students were observed to exhibit different ways of doing assignments like bringing in "different viewpoint" and "completing work creatively".

The critical points of the discussion brought out how creativity impacts learning which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes of the study (source: created by authors)

Themes	Sub-theme	Response category	Contents
Impact of creativity on learning	Enhance educational process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Practical and application-oriented approach; ■ Interesting and hence easy to understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of mind; ■ Guide students; ■ Shape them for future; ■ Indulges students in practical aspects; ■ Focus on application-oriented knowledge; ■ Creates interest; ■ Developing interest makes the topic easy to understand; ■ Grasp the topic clearly; ■ It makes learning fun and joyful;

Continue of Table 2

Themes	Sub-theme	Response category	Contents
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning becomes burden-free; ■ Remembers the concept for longer time; ■ Engage children.
	Cognitive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Freedom for deep thought; ■ Thinking outside the box; ■ Inquisitive; ■ Imagination; ■ Developing thinking process; ■ Questioning; ■ Problem-solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stimulate deep-thinking; ■ Encourage the development of new ideas; ■ Gives new vision; ■ Enables the student to come out of their comfort zone and innovate; ■ Develop students' thinking ability; ■ Triggers the imagination of a child; ■ Problem-solving becomes a habit and fun; ■ Thinking outside the box; ■ Learning through questioning; ■ Learn through different situations; ■ Bringing a challenge.
	Behavioural aspect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Judging; ■ Overall developmental. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It gives them perspective to judge; ■ Brings out the talent of the student; ■ Personal development; ■ Promotes emotional, physical, and social development; ■ Develop skills of fluency and flexibility; ■ Overall development of child.
Characteristics of creative students	Mannerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stands different from the crowd; ■ Confident; ■ Initiative taking; ■ Eagerness to learn; ■ Share different ideas; ■ Enthusiastic; ■ Curiosity; ■ Outgoing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Uniqueness in assignments; ■ Stands different; ■ Shows exclusive patterns; ■ Not in a stereotype frame; ■ Answers confidently; ■ Takes initiative; ■ Leads; ■ Eager to learn; ■ Enthusiastic learner; ■ Explore something new even after getting results; ■ Does routine tasks also differently; ■ A different perspective to look at things; ■ Have an unusual solution to the problem; ■ Detail-oriented; ■ Quality of curiosity; ■ Enthusiastic.
	Processing/action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Think logically; ■ Questioning; ■ Inquisitive; ■ Active in activities; ■ Class; ■ Participation and discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Think and give logic answers; ■ Self-discussion; ■ Poses challenging questions; ■ Ask questions beyond the curriculum; ■ Challenge the <i>status quo</i>; ■ Asks question; ■ Participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; ■ Exhibits interest; ■ Give suggestions; ■ Puts forth their viewpoint; ■ Not hesitant in communicating ideas; ■ Complete conviction.

End of Table 2

Themes	Sub-theme	Response category	Contents
Identification mechanism	Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mannerism; ■ Behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Observations of mannerism; ■ Ways.
	Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Class participation; ■ Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Always says bring in a different perspective; ■ Participation in other activities.
	Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Viewpoints; ■ Submission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different ways of doing assignments; ■ Different viewpoint; ■ Complete work in a creative manner.

6. Discussion

The study's objective was to analyze the perception of teachers toward the role of creativity in learning. The study further categorizes the attribution of behaviour or acts of the creative student. During the FGD, all teachers across the four groups accepted that all students have the potential to be creative and also that the creativity facilitates learning, which strengthens and supports the argument of the earlier researchers (Maslow, 1968; May, 1975; Rogers, 1982; Torrance, 1987; Treffinger, 1989; Berggraf Saebø et al., 2007; Craft et al., 2007). The teachers could identify the students with higher creative potential mainly through observation. The teachers identified the behavioural and cognitive tendencies of the children, which reflect their creativity and creativity potential. The creative child is associated with unique and thinking outside the box, which is an extension of Fisher's (2004) research.

RQ1: Does creativity makes a difference in learning? What is the role of creativity in learning?

The teachers' perception of creativity is positive, and they consider creativity has a vital role in learning as it helps the students to gain fundamental knowledge instead of bookish knowledge. Teachers believe that creativity develops a practical approach toward learning and makes learning exciting and easy. Creativity stimulates deep thinking, leading to new ideas; it is corroborated by the statement of a teacher.

Karpova et al. (2011) and Moran (2010) state that creativity leads to personal development, which is reflected in the teachers' discussions, who also discussed the role of creativity in learning, stating that it promotes the overall development of the child-like emotional, physical and social development. Teachers believe that children are inquisitive and have a great capacity for imagination and fantasy who provides a very different and fresh perspective. Being able to come up with new ideas and solve everyday problems is also important for people plays an important role in personal development. Teachers believe that creativity makes learning more effective and exciting. Creativity enhances learning and fosters creative and behavioural development.

RQ2: How do teachers identify the creative students? What kind of behaviour does the creative student exhibit?

The teachers believe that teaching should be done so that the students actively participate in the class and gain interest in the subject. Teacher–student interaction plays a vital role in teaching. They emphasize active learning by using smart boards, discussion, and interaction.

Many teachers make the class more interesting and more straightforward to understand. Teachers believe that to foster creativity “thematic method” where different topics are associated can be used. This helps them to look at things from different points of view and experiment with alternative approaches to solving problems or challenges. There seems to be a consensus among the teaching fraternity about fostering creativity among the students.

The teachers’ observation of the child is the first step toward the identification of the creative potential of the student. The teachers can identify the creative student by their involvement, engagement, inactivity, and behaviour (Pennings et al., 2014; Booren et al., 2012). De Souza Fleith’s (2000) characteristics of creative students shows reflections in the current study. The teachers define the creative student as one who leads or stands different from the crowd and takes the initiative. The teachers believe that the creative student exhibits distinct behaviour, asks questions, does the assigned task differently, and has a unique approach. The extant literature supports the teacher’s perception that the creative child dares to try new things, is expressive and willing to share what he or she feels and thinks, motivates himself/herself, and does not get carried away by others’ thoughts; is determined to find solutions to problems. Creative students are those who always attempt to do the routine differently and tend to come up with many ideas in response to verbal/visual cues. They look at things from different perspectives. They give unusual solutions to problems. They might show fine detail in drawing/language. They find it easy to elaborate on ideas of others. The existent literature describes the desirable characteristics of the creative child as perseverance, curiosity, risk-takers, enthusiasm, originality, and initiative-taking (de Souza Fleith, 2000; Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005) matches the perception of the respondents of the current study. Such students think and give a logic answers with confidence.

They are not hesitant in communicating their ideas and thoughts, despite the difference in opinion from the rest of the group and asks questions with complete conviction.

The student with higher creative potential is inquisitive and eager to learn. The discussions reflected that: creative students would always have some parallel method of the concept, which is different from the teacher’s method. It is not difficult to identify the creative students as they try to put their ideas, ask questions inquisitively, and are eager to learn more and new things constantly. Creative students are inquisitive and develop many questions in their minds, and they keep asking questions to their teachers.

Creativity is associated with divergent thinking, and the student is perceived to be creative if he/she exhibits originality, flexibility, and fluency (Guilford, 1986; Runco, 2003). Most of the teachers considered that the creative students are those whose behaviour reflects the unique ways, and hence they perceive students as creators who generate original ideas. This also has been proved in the extant literature (Guilford, 1986; Runco, 2003; Morais & Azevedo, 2011).

The current study shows that the teachers’ perception of creativity’s role in learning and the characteristics of the creative students are synchronous with the thoughts of earlier researchers.

The study has few limitations. Although there are many studies focusing on creativity fostering and teachers role in that, but there are very few studies addressing the issue of teacher’s perception about creativity or creative child. So we focused only on identifying the themes and used only qualitative method to gather in-depth information. The multi-method

or multi-level study could add more to this research. In the current study, the sample was restricted to teachers. However, involving students into the study would have added more value to the findings.

7. Conclusions

Creativity has a significant role in facilitating learning. Teachers unanimously accept the role of creativity in enhancing learning and facilitating the child's overall development. Based on the attribution theory and self-fulfilling prophecy, since the teachers' perception of the creative child is in confirmation with the available literature, it could be considered positive signalling to nurture the child's creative potential. Teachers' ability to understand the behaviour of creative child will facilitate creativity fostering. Teachers identify the creative child through observation and interaction. The creative child exhibit curious and unique behaviour, which makes him/her stand out. Fostering the competence of the child today would provide a competent workforce for the future, as Cropley (2020) posits: creativity has been seen as the only unique 'human' characteristic, defining an area where, for instance, microelectronics cannot go. In this view, creative thinking is a bastion of human dignity in an age where machines, especially computers, take over routine skilled activities and everyday thinking.

Implication

The current research focuses on the teachers' perception of creativity and how they identify the child's creative potential. The study could be replicated in different countries, and the gap between perception and reality could be identified. This gap identification could be considered based on providing developmental intervention to the teachers to foster creativity among the children, which would help unleash the students' creative potential and prepare them for a sustainable future. The policy-makers can draft the norms to evaluate the teachers' perception of creativity and provide interventions to modify their perceptions. The research also points toward the non-creativity nurturing environment of state schools. In the Indian context, the students below the poverty line can afford to enrol in state schools owing to fee constraints. The research shows that the child's creative potential is suppressed in that environment. This is a clear indication that India's education system would not be able to develop creative individuals as their creative potential would be suppressed at the school level. Hence, it becomes all the more critical for the department of education to intervene and provide training to the state school teachers to foster the students' creativity. The education management policy and practices could be developed to strengthen the creativity nurturing behaviour of the teachers.

Note

Ethics statement: the consent of participants for the publication of findings was secure.

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