

Freedom to Create, Values to Guide



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Childhood is a beautiful moment in our developmental stage of life. This period of a child's life is marked by a lot of innocence and playfulness.

Learning during childhood is an experience altogether different from learning at later stages of life. Childhood learning is an activity filled with fun and laughter and should never be stressful or overly serious.

During childhood, children should be allowed to ask questions to satisfy the inquisitive nature of their young and growing minds.

Asking questions is a natural part of learning and helps children develop their understanding of the world around them.

Making mistakes during the learning process is quite normal for children. Even through those mistakes, there are valuable lessons to be learned. Normally, children try not to repeat the mistakes they made during childhood in the later stages of their lives.

According to experts, the mind of a child can be analogically explained as a sponge that keeps absorbing. Parents and teachers should therefore feel free to introduce children to many different subjects and areas of knowledge.

Nevertheless, whatever we teach children should be taught without coercion. Children should be given the freedom to learn naturally, explore their interests, and develop their abilities in an enjoyable and supportive environment.

Among the many things children learn during their tender years at the preschool, playschool, and primary school levels are languages, values, basic problem-solving skills, and creativity.

According to experts in education, childhood is a highly recommended time for learning languages. This is for the simple reason that children are not shy about making mistakes.

When it comes to creativity, it is believed that it is embedded in the soul and exists outside an individual. As such, parents and teachers of children learners should pay individual attention to every child in the family or in the class.

By doing so, we would be able to identify what each child is good at, and the potential that is hibernating in the soul of the learner can be brought to the surface.

Like human intelligence, creativity is diverse. Basically, creativity shows up in many forms and in different sectors of our human life. It is about time we moved away from the old school of thought that gives the idea that only a select group of people can be creative, while others are not.

Surprisingly, not everyone has to be a great painter, performer, musician, or sculptor to demonstrate one's creative talent or skill. The simplest forms of creativity can be displayed in the art of culinary skills, floral decoration, and house decoration. Those who are good with words can become prolific writers and poets.

Another interesting fact about creativity is that, besides being born with the talent for something, one can also become creative through learning. In the modern world, there are classes held for those who want to become painters or have a strong inclination towards playing a musical instrument.

Experts in creativity say that there are magical moments during practice when one can get into the creative zone. More often, this happens to those who love writing, intend to create a piece of music, or are trying to solve a problem.

As such, the creative process demands our concentration, commitment, patience, and perseverance.

Since creativity is something that is inborn and can be learned, our schools and homes should create a conducive environment for children and adult learners to display their creativity and learn how to be creative.

To create a critical and creative society, the government, on its part, especially in third-world countries, should allocate a considerable amount of the national budget towards this purpose. By doing so, developing countries will be able to narrow the gap between themselves and the advanced countries of the world.

Since the prerequisite for creativity and the creative process can only take place in freedom and in a free environment, teachers and parents should allow room for freedom of expression and experimentation with new ideas.

For this reason, our homes and learning institutions should change their educational policies in tandem with the needs of the modern world.

Of course, not all innovative, critical, and creative ideas are acceptable from the Islamic and Eastern perspectives. As such, we need to tap and cap creativity.

Through this mechanism, we allow the free flow of ideas, and at the same time, we block or put a limit on what is acceptable and what is not in Islam when it comes to creativity and the creative process.

The yardstick for deciding what is allowed and prohibited in Islam is to look at the creative process from the Qur'anic and Sunnah perspectives.

Going by the Qur'anic and Sunnah perspectives, nudity and vulgarity in paintings, filmmaking, and printed materials are things that are definitely not approved in Islam.

Creativity, as a subject matter, display, and expression, should align with ethical values, manners, and mannerisms in Islam.

This standard set by Islam is what differentiates creativity as a subject from what is allowed and practised in the secular countries of the world.

(The views expressed are those of Dr. Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak from the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Potret Online)