



SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESLLD)

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on

Imbibing Innovative Thinking Among Students

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Backdrop:

The ability to think innovatively is a crucial skill. For students, developing an innovative mindset not only enhances academic performance but also prepares them to face real-world challenges with confidence. Ability to think “out of the box” enhances their ability to solve complex issues.

Understanding Innovative Thinking:

Innovative thinking involves approaching problems with a fresh perspective and crafting unique solutions. It is not limited to inventing new technologies; it is about finding better ways to accomplish tasks and solve problems.

For students, innovation means stepping beyond the traditional rote learning and engaging with concepts in ways that encourage critical analysis, curiosity, and experimentation. It is about asking "why," "what if," and "why not," rather than simply accepting things as they are.

Importance of Innovative Thinking:

Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills: Innovative thinking equips students to tackle academic and personal challenges by looking beyond conventional solutions.

Adaptability: In a rapidly evolving world, students with innovative mindset can adapt to new situations and technologies with ease.

Leadership Traits: Innovative thinkers often emerge as leaders, capable of inspiring others and driving positive change.

Career Readiness: Employers value individuals who can bring fresh ideas and perspectives to the workplace, making innovative thinking a sought-after skill.

Strategies to Develop Innovative Thinking:

Cultivating Curiosity: It is the cornerstone of innovation. Students should nurture a habit of questioning and exploring. Reading widely, engaging with diverse subjects, and staying updated on domestic / global trends can broaden perspectives.

Embracing Failure as a Learning Tool: Fear of failure often stifles creativity. Students should view setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow. This approach boosts confidence and enables them to experiment with new ideas.

Engaging in Collaborative Learning: Collaboration fosters exchange of ideas and enhances creativity. Working in groups exposes students to diverse viewpoints, encouraging them to think outside their own experiences.

Practicing Design Thinking: This problem-solving approach emphasizes empathy, ideation, and experimentation. By understanding the needs of others, students can develop solutions that are both creative and practical.

Utilizing Technology Wisely: Technology offers countless tools to boost creativity. From apps for mind mapping to platforms for virtual collaboration, students can leverage technology to explore and execute innovative ideas.

Incorporating Play and Imagination: Play stimulates creativity and relieves stress. Activities like drawing, gaming can help students think more flexibly. Engaging the imagination allows for exploring “what if” scenarios that may lead to innovative solutions.

Learning from Innovators: Studying lives and works of innovators can provide inspiration. Biographies, TED Talks, and case studies of successful entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists can shed light on mindset and habits that foster innovation.

Participation in Innovation Challenges: Competitions like hackathons, science fairs, or entrepreneurship challenges encourage students to think creatively under real-world constraints. These platforms not only spark innovation but also build confidence.

Reflection and Documenting Ideas: Maintaining a journal to jot down ideas, observations, and reflections can be invaluable. These might reveal patterns towards further exploration. Reflecting on past successes and failures also sharpens one’s innovative abilities.

Overcoming Barriers to Innovation:

Students may often face obstacles such as rigid curriculums, limited resources, or fear of judgment. To overcome these, they should:

- Seek supportive mentors and peers who encourage creativity.
- Advocate for flexible learning environments that prioritize exploration and experimentation.

- Develop resilience to criticism by focusing on personal growth and improvement.

Role of Academic Institutions:

The institutions at all levels have an important catalytic role to play in imbuing this important attribute among students. This is not an easy task as the students under the current set up are accustomed to think in the “traditional way”. To mould their attitude and build an “inquisitive mind” to think creatively is a huge task.

Some of the strategies the educators can adopt include the following:

Integrating How and Why in Curriculum: This is the most key step. Traditionally, our curriculum primarily contains “what proportion” of any subject / theory / context. The design of the curriculum should move toward applications, and rationality (why) aspects. This will inculcate thinking propensity among students.

Changed Pedagogies: Simultaneously, the way things are taught, and POs are designed must also move up from “level 1” (remember) to at least “level 3” (apply) or above in terms of Bloom’s Taxonomy for all subjects at all levels. This itself will transform the educational philosophy and force the students to think by themselves to arrive at solutions. In the process, they will develop innovative thinking.

Develop New Frontiers of Teaching: Educators must try to develop some new ways of teaching the old things / concepts. For example, there can be debates on concepts, ideas between “believers” and “non-believers”, role plays between two thoughts, new ways / processes of applications, and so on. Idea is that educators must go on innovating and experimenting with new ways of teaching.

Course on Innovative Thinking: It is high time that HEIs develop course on critical thinking / innovative thinking as a part of the curriculum. This will help the students to take decisions from both sides of the brain and acclimatize themselves with the tools & techniques of innovative thinking.

Introduction of Course on Design Thinking: All HEIs should develop a course on “design thinking” at graduation level. This will help students to understand the process of non-linear iterative methods for creating innovative solutions. This will certainly enable the students to learn the innovative thinking process and creating solutions therefrom in a structured manner.

Moving Ahead:

Innovative thinking is a skill that can be cultivated through practice and willingness to step out of comfort zones. For students, embracing this mindset unlocks a world of possibilities: academically, personally, and professionally. By fostering curiosity and creativity, students can become drivers of innovation in real life. This will help them to be successful and face challenges of real life in a more determined way.
