

Reflections from Preeti Patel, Director of Education, Montessori Global Education

Creativity and Nurturing Creative Confidence



Is it true that we are
either creative or not?

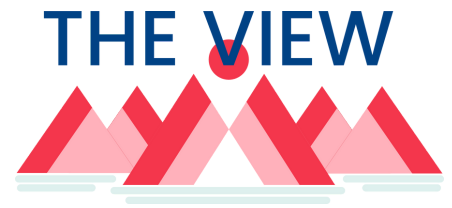
Do you find yourself
saying, "I am really not
that creative"?

Why do you
think that this
thought crosses
our minds



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When we think about creativity or ask someone about the definition of creativity we often think about and describe creative arts such as dance, sculpture, painting and drawing. This is perhaps because creativity is the freest form of self-expression and we feel that it is through these creative arts that this form of self-expression can be achieved.

Definitions of creativity are not straightforward, however. One definition of creativity that I came across was “creativity, the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form”.

This definition and others would suggest that creativity is not or should not be limited to creative arts but considered in the broadest sense. What I found was common in the many definitions was a number of components –

- Imagination
- Originality – the ability to come up with ideas and thoughts/products that are new and original
- Productivity (the ability to generate a variety of different ideas through divergent thinking)
- Problem solving (application of knowledge and imagination to a given situation)
- The ability to produce an outcome of value and worth.

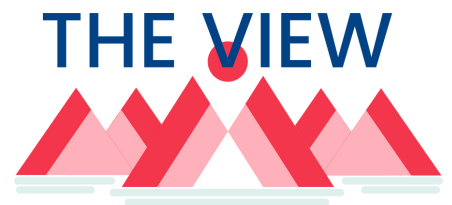
I thought that the last component was an interesting one especially when we are considering children.

Where children are concerned especially we should not be thinking about creativity or creative expression in terms of the outcome or product but focus more on the idea that creativity is a process. We must believe that every child has creative potential and that every child can express that creativity – this is only possible if the focus shifts from the outcome to the process and potential.

Maria Montessori encapsulates this thought,

“To understand the child as a creative power, to realise that he is psychologically different from us, to perceive that his need is different from ours is a step forward for all human aspirations and prepares a loftier level for social life.”

Maria Montessori, Citizen of the World, pg. 67



Think process not outcome

So the questions that arise are “How do we shift the focus to the process and not the final outcome?” and “Why is this so important?”

I think everyone will agree that it is possible to both encourage or discourage the development of creativity. Research indicates that children are more creative before they enter the educational journey – nursery/preschool/ kindergarten. So this would suggest that by the time our youngest children start their formal schooling they have already lost or are starting to lose their creativity – this I think you will agree is very concerning.

So, we must agree that Education therefore has an important role to play in this – both formal and informal and from the very earliest stages of learning and development – both at home and in any educational setting.

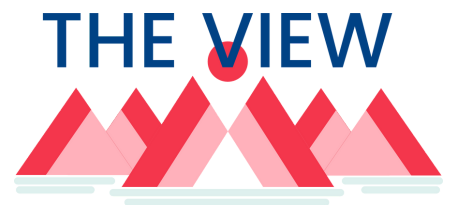
Developing creative confidence is a key 21st century skill. Most child development theories have a view that children are highly creative, but studies indicate that that this level of creativity is not necessarily maintained throughout childhood and into adulthood.

However, if this is a SUCH a key 21st century skill the question we must ask is “How do we ensure that that creative confidence is not only developed but also truly nurtured so that it is maintained throughout an individual’s life?”

What we know is that it is essential for children to develop creative skills as this helps them express themselves be it through play, art, music or story telling because this offers children a way of understanding the world around them.

“The children of today will make all the discoveries of tomorrow. All the discoveries of mankind will be known to them and they will improve what has been done and make fresh discoveries. They must make all the improvements in houses, cities, communication, methods of production, etc. that are to be made. The future generation must not only know how to do what we can teach them, they must be able to go a step further.”

Maria Montessori, The 1946 Lectures, pg. 137



Create opportunities with the child in mind

If we truly believe this then, We – the adults must be consciously aware that we can either provide the opportunities for children to learn, grow, and develop in a safe and carefully prepared environment or we can take those opportunities away. We can either create environments with the child in mind, considering both their current development and their future needs, we can respect the child and their natural progression, honouring their spirit and independence or we can continue to be focused on foisting our own agendas.

In short we must recognise that Adults, therefore, can act as supporters and coaches, facilitators and models of creativity for children or have the potential to stifle opportunities for creativity by being overly dictating or prescriptive.

Several elements can conspire against the encouragement of creativity in the early years:

- We can limit creativity by stifling imagination, through lack of opportunity, resource or distraction
- By having low expectations about what young children are able to achieve
- The pressure from adults to focus on literacy and numeracy,
- A lack of training,
- Be outcome focused or
- Simply by not recognising that creativity supports every area of development and learning.

Although creativity is often associated to what are considered creative subjects – such as music and art, we must recognise that creativity is not subject specific and supporting and nurturing creative confidence should not be limited to just specific subjects.

If the focus remains on being subject specific, then children will be unable to understand how the skills they have developed are transferable.

By offering extended opportunities adults can support children in making connections and consolidating their creative confidence. Nurturing creative confidence requires concentration, persistence and determination to succeed and an understanding of the value added to every aspect of our lives. Whilst this may in fact be a frustrating and difficult process, we must REMEMBER that Creativity deserves to be taken seriously.

**We would love to hear about how you are Nurturing Creative Confidence
either in your Homes or your Educational Setting.**

**Join the discussion and email us your thoughts
network@montessori.org.uk**