

Design thinking for youngsters is essential for innovation

Breaking away from a traditional learn-memorise-test approach to education, design thinking is paving the way for inspiring 'out-of-the-box' thinking amongst youngsters.

You would be hard-pressed to sit through any meeting nowadays without hearing a rallying cry to 'think outside of the box' or 'push the envelope'. There is constant encouragement to bring creative and innovative ideas to the table.

"However, this is starkly contrasted by the fact that our minds have been wired from a young age to approach tasks with logic and with specific pre-defined formulas. Most schools follow a learn-memorise-test approach to education, with little room for innovation and creativity," states Jacki McEwen, co-owner of Eclipse Public Relations, with a background in design and who is mother of a high school learner. "The introduction of design thinking in schools is an encouraging trend, showing great results."



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According to an article published on Designorate, the benefits of integrating design thinking into the school curriculum is that it will assist learners with their creativity and improve their thinking/innovation skills in a variety of disciplines.

"Design thinking promotes an empathetic approach to solving problems by understanding the requirements of the target audience and developing human-centric solutions."

One example of how design thinking has been successfully implemented at school level is at the Nueva School in California, where learners were required to design an LED lamp for a family member. However, instead of jumping directly into the design process, the students had to select a specific family member and collect information about how they would use the lamps in order to create one that fitted that person's specific needs.

"While there is still quite a bit of debate around whether design thinking should be included within the school curriculum, two models have already been explored in the UK - the Frog's Collective Action Toolkit and the IDEO's Design Thinking for Educators. Both models explore different approaches in order to seek a better understanding of problems requiring design solutions."

The Frog's Collective Action Toolkit aims to assist learners when it comes to identifying and solving problems with which they are faced using a variety of imaginative and team-building skills to find a solution. Conversely, The IDEO's Design Thinking for Educators model focuses more on the teacher and how each individual implements the design thinking process.

Design thinking and innovation thought leader, Iain Bryant who is a director at Future by Design – Innovation, HCD, says, "Design thinking as a tool is equally effective in solving challenges in an educational setting as it is in banking, medicine, business or any other discipline."

"In a business world that requires employees to be more than just logical thinkers, it strikes me that introducing the design thinking method into the foundation phase of a child's schooling years could result in learners gaining the emotional and creative tools needed to become all-rounders in the business world - something which has become so critical in this day and age," concludes McEwen.

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