



Fostering Creativity in General Stream Secondary School Students of Gandhinagar District: An NEP 2020 Perspective

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Abstract

Creativity is increasingly recognised as a core twenty-first-century competency, yet it remains comparatively under-emphasised in the pedagogy and assessment of General Stream secondary school students, whose curriculum has traditionally prioritised broad content coverage over open-ended, divergent thinking. This paper presents a theoretical framework for fostering creativity among General Stream secondary school students of Gandhinagar District, situating the discussion within the transformative vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Drawing on Guilford's structure-of-intellect model, Torrance's componential conceptualisation of creativity (fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration), and Amabile's componential theory of creativity, the paper conceptually differentiates creative thinking from general academic achievement and argues that the General Stream, precisely because it is not narrowly subject-specialised, offers a distinctive and currently under-utilised opportunity for interdisciplinary, arts-integrated creative pedagogy. The paper examines specific NEP 2020 provisions — multidisciplinary and flexible curricula, arts integration, experiential and competency-based learning, and reduced content load — that structurally enable creativity fostering, and proposes a set of classroom-level pedagogical strategies through which these provisions can be operationalised. The paper concludes by identifying the principal challenges in translating this policy vision into classroom practice, including assessment rigidity, teacher preparedness, and resource constraints, and outlines implications for teacher education, school leadership, and curriculum planning.



Keywords: *creativity, General Stream, secondary school students, NEP 2020, divergent thinking, pedagogical strategies, Gandhinagar District*

1. Introduction

Creativity — broadly understood as the capacity to generate ideas, solutions, or products that are both novel and appropriate to context — has moved from the periphery to the centre of contemporary educational discourse (Guilford, 1967; Torrance, 1974). Global frameworks for twenty-first-century skills consistently list creativity alongside critical thinking, communication, and collaboration as an essential competency for learners navigating rapidly changing academic and occupational landscapes. Within the Indian secondary schooling structure, however, the General Stream — students who have not yet committed to a narrowly defined Science, Commerce, or Arts specialisation, or who follow a broad, non-vocational curriculum at the secondary stage — has historically received less pedagogical attention with respect to creativity fostering than subject-specialised streams, where creativity is more readily associated with visible domains such as art, music, or design.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a significant opening for reconceptualising creativity as a cross-curricular, developmentally central goal rather than a subject-specific add-on. Its emphasis on multidisciplinary, flexibility of subject choice, integration of the arts and vocational exposure into mainstream schooling, and a shift away from rote, content-heavy instruction toward competency-based and experiential learning collectively create structural conditions favourable to creativity development (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). This paper argues that General Stream secondary school students of Gandhinagar District, situated precisely at this policy inflection point, represent an important — and theoretically instructive — population for examining how creativity can be systematically fostered within mainstream, non-specialised secondary education.



1.1 Rationale and Significance

General Stream students are frequently assumed, by default, to be less "creative" than their Arts- or vocationally-inclined peers, an assumption this paper contests on theoretical grounds. Because General Stream students are not yet channelled into narrow disciplinary silos, they retain broader cognitive and curricular flexibility — precisely the condition under which divergent thinking is theorised to flourish (Guilford, 1967). A framework that articulates how this potential can be pedagogically activated, consistent with NEP 2020's structural provisions, is therefore both theoretically warranted and practically significant for teachers, curriculum planners, and teacher educators in Gandhinagar District and comparable contexts.

1.2 Objectives of the Paper

- To conceptually examine creativity and its core components as applicable to General Stream secondary school students.
- To analyse the provisions of NEP 2020 that structurally enable creativity fostering in General Stream classrooms.
- To propose a theoretical framework linking creativity components, NEP 2020 provisions, and classroom-level pedagogical strategies.
- To identify challenges in translating this policy vision into classroom practice and to outline implications for teacher education and school leadership.

2. Conceptual Understanding of Creativity

Guilford's (1967) structure-of-intellect model was among the first to formally distinguish divergent thinking — the generation of multiple possible solutions — from convergent thinking, which seeks a single correct answer, positioning creativity as a distinct cognitive operation rather than a by-product of general intelligence. Building on this foundation, Torrance (1974) operationalised creativity into four measurable components that remain widely used in educational contexts: fluency (the ability to generate a large number of ideas), flexibility (the ability to approach a problem from varied perspectives or categories), originality (the generation of statistically



infrequent or novel ideas), and elaboration (the ability to develop, refine, and add detail to an idea). Amabile's (1996) componential theory extends this cognitive account by situating creativity at the intersection of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and task motivation, thereby highlighting that classroom environment and motivational climate — not only innate ability — substantially shape creative output. Together, these frameworks inform the conceptual model proposed in Section 4.

3. The General Stream Learner: A Distinctive Context for Creativity

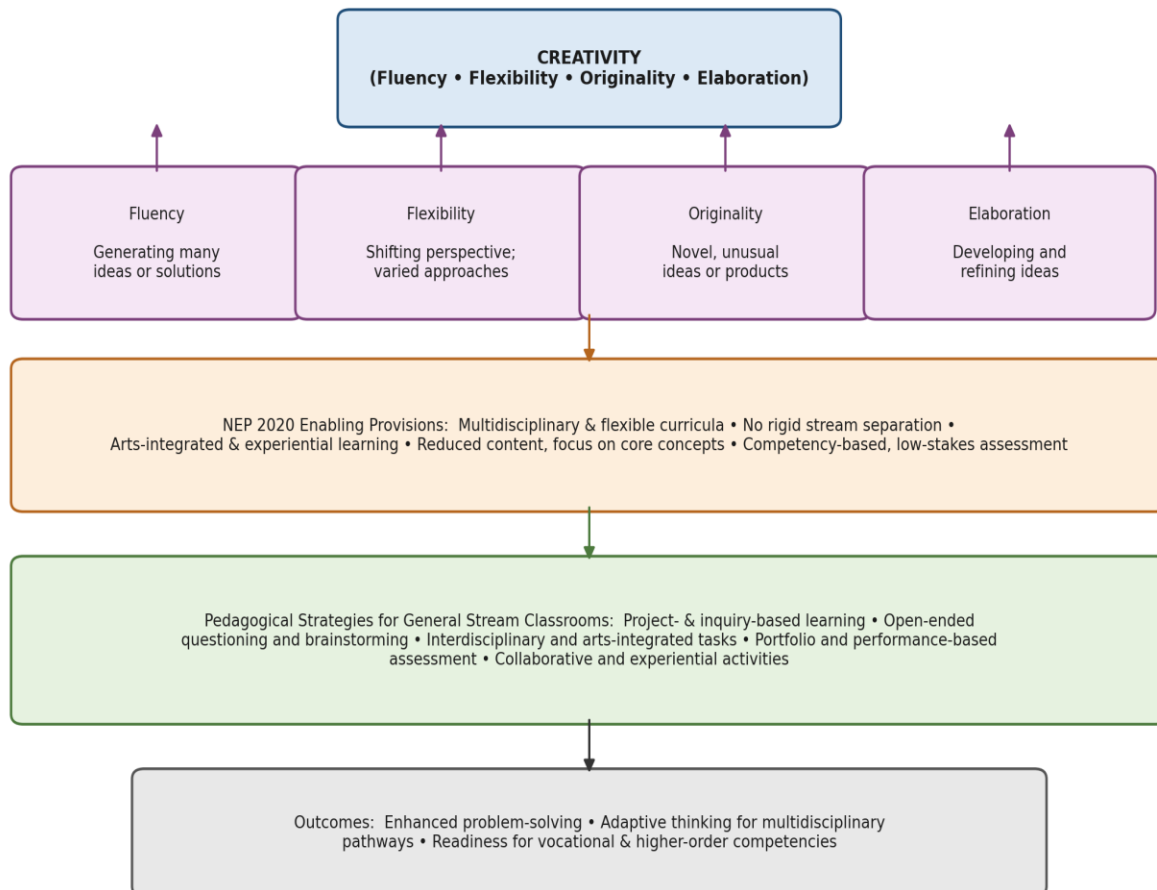
General Stream secondary school students typically follow a broad-based curriculum without early specialisation into Science, Commerce, or a single vocational track. This positions them differently from subject-specialised peers in at least three respects relevant to creativity fostering. First, their exposure across multiple subject domains offers a wider associative base from which novel connections — a hallmark of originality — can be drawn. Second, the absence of high-stakes, narrowly disciplinary assessment pressure (such as that experienced by Science-stream students preparing for competitive entrance examinations) may afford greater instructional space for open-ended, exploratory tasks. Third, General Stream classrooms, by virtue of their heterogeneous composition, are structurally well-suited to the interdisciplinary and arts-integrated pedagogies that NEP 2020 envisions for all learners. These features position the General Stream not as a residual or default category but as a distinctive and pedagogically promising context for creativity development.

4. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Integrating the theoretical foundations above with the policy architecture of NEP 2020, this paper proposes a four-tier conceptual framework (Figure 1): the core construct of creativity, comprising the four Torrance components; the NEP 2020 provisions that structurally enable creativity development; classroom-level pedagogical strategies through which these provisions can be operationalised in General Stream classrooms; and the resulting learner outcomes.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Fostering Creativity Among General Stream Secondary School Students under NEP 2020



4.1 NEP 2020 Enabling Provisions

NEP 2020 explicitly calls for multidisciplinary and flexible curricular structures that allow students to combine subjects across traditional stream boundaries, reducing the rigidity that has historically constrained General Stream students to a narrow, low-status curricular identity (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). The policy further mandates integration of the arts, vocational exposure, and experiential learning into mainstream schooling for all students



rather than confining creative and applied learning to specialised tracks. Its emphasis on reducing curricular content in favour of core-concept mastery, together with its call for competency-based, low-stakes assessment, directly addresses two of the most commonly cited structural barriers to creativity fostering — content overload and high-stakes, convergent-answer testing.

4.2 Pedagogical Strategies for General Stream Classrooms

Translating these enabling provisions into classroom practice requires deliberate pedagogical choices. Project- and inquiry-based learning tasks allow students to exercise fluency and elaboration by generating and developing their own lines of investigation. Open-ended questioning and structured brainstorming activities cultivate flexibility by requiring students to consider multiple approaches to a single problem. Interdisciplinary and arts-integrated tasks — for instance, combining mathematics with visual design, or social science with creative writing — draw on the General Stream learner's broad subject exposure to encourage originality. Finally, portfolio and performance-based assessment, as opposed to single-attempt convergent testing, allows creative process and iterative refinement to be recognised and evaluated, consistent with Amabile's (1996) emphasis on motivational climate.

4.3 Anticipated Outcomes

The framework theorises that sustained application of these strategies within an NEP 2020-aligned curricular structure would enhance General Stream students' problem-solving capacity, support adaptive thinking suited to increasingly multidisciplinary higher-education and career pathways, and build readiness for the vocational and higher-order competencies that NEP 2020 identifies as central goals of secondary education.

5. Challenges in Translating Policy into Practice

Despite this enabling policy architecture, several challenges are likely to constrain implementation. Assessment systems at the school and board level remain substantially oriented toward convergent, content-recall formats, creating a disjunction between policy intent and lived classroom incentives. Many in-service teachers have not received structured training in creativity-fostering pedagogy or



in assessing creative process rather than product accuracy, and teacher education programmes have historically allocated limited space to this domain. Resource constraints — including class size, availability of materials for arts-integrated or project-based work, and time pressure within an already dense timetable — further complicate implementation, particularly in government and rural schools within Gandhinagar District.

6. Implications

6.1 Implications for Teacher Education

Teacher education programmes, including B.Ed. curricula, would benefit from explicit modules on creativity theory, divergent-thinking pedagogy, and portfolio-based assessment design, equipping prospective teachers to operationalise NEP 2020's provisions in General Stream classrooms.

6.2 Implications for School Leadership and Curriculum Planning

School leaders can support creativity fostering by protecting curricular time for project- and inquiry-based work, and by revising internal assessment weightage to recognise creative process alongside content mastery, in line with NEP 2020's competency-based assessment vision.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As a theoretical paper, this framework has not been empirically tested; future research should examine the proposed relationships through classroom-based intervention studies and through the construction of a creativity assessment tool suited to General Stream secondary school students of Gandhinagar District, paralleling the psychometric scale-construction work already undertaken for related constructs in this research programme.

8. Conclusion

This paper has argued that General Stream secondary school students occupy a distinctive and currently under-recognised position for creativity fostering, and that NEP 2020 provides the



structural policy conditions — multidisciplinary, arts integration, experiential learning, and competency-based assessment — necessary to activate this potential. By integrating Guilford's, Torrance's, and Amabile's theoretical contributions within a single conceptual framework linking policy provisions to classroom strategies and learner outcomes, this paper offers a foundation for both future empirical research and immediate pedagogical action in Gandhinagar District and comparable educational contexts.

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