

Creya: A harbinger of change in education system in India

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Creya is a pioneer in the studio-based learning in schools, where a coach guides students in solving real life problems, using an interdisciplinary and hands-on approach. Creya Learning Studio provides children authentic projects helping them learn experientially and make connections between their learning and the real world. **Hari K Verma**, CEO & Co-founder, Creya Learning, in an interview with **RG Gireesh**, *Education Insider* Correspondent, talks about the projects of Creya Learning and the current school education in India. Excerpts:

Could you tell us about Creya Learning?

Creya Learning & Research is a research-based educational organization that has the mission to make learning in schools relevant. We believe over and above the

subjects and concepts, skills and new methods of learning are more important for children. These areas are never focused in most of our schools. We partner with schools across the country to equip their students with the skills, attitudes and competencies which they need to succeed in the 21st century. We mainly do this through our flagship product, XEL, a pioneering in-school programme with the following elements:

- We establish a first-of-its-kind physical space in schools called the “Learning Studio”. We equip the Studio with all the engineering constructible, digital media equipment, curriculum, teaching and learning materials and enablers for success.
- School teachers will be helped to make the leap from traditional teachers to new-age mentors and facilitators who use STEM Education, Design Thinking and Experiential Learning pedagogies both in the Studio and in their regular classrooms.
- Implementation support and guidance during the entire contract period through video and audio repositories, Creya Connect Studio etc. The schools enter into a long-term contract with Creya- usually for about four years- and pay a subscription fee for using Creya Learning Studio that comprises hardware, curriculum and consumables.

What is the current scenario of primary education in India?

As per the 8th All India Education Survey (AIES), our country has roughly 23 crore children enrolled in schools and 29% of these children (6.8 crore) are enrolled in private schools. The quality of education in our primary schools, including the private, is not at all satisfactory as per the recent Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2014. Even the foundational skills like reading and arithmetic are not being taught at the expected levels. What is more frightening is that students of the best schools are subjected to rote learning methods. They are not given opportunities to learn about the life and leadership skills such as communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking that will help them succeed in their future workplaces and in the life. The impact of new methods of learning is far-reaching as it creates employable skills among our unemployed youth and innovation in our research institutions and universities.

How important is the experience-based learning and how does it transform our school education system?

The objective of education is learning and not teaching. What happens in traditional classrooms is teaching. The teacher is the driver of the process. Memorization is mistaken for understanding and most of what is taught in a classroom setting is forgotten and much of what is remembered is irrelevant. What should happen in a modern classroom is “Learning”. Learning is about understanding. There are many ways of learning and teaching is just one way. Research has shown that children learn best when they are engaged, when they see the purpose of learning and understand the application of abstract theories in the real world. All these need children to be involved in learning through

discovery, trial and error and group work. This is essentially what experiential learning is all about. Experiential learning does not impose anything on children while it helps them understand things.

Today, children know that they can learn most things being taught in the classrooms using the Internet. Information is available on the fingertips. So why do we need teachers to be disseminators of information that already exists? The most viable alternative is to bring in "Experiential" learning into the classrooms and this has a potential to transform education by enhancing learning outcomes and ensuring our children have the skills, literacy and competencies required for survival in the 21st century.

In an experiential classroom, the teacher becomes a mentor, guide, facilitator and often a co-learner.



A Creya Learning Studio where theory knowledge is converted into experience based learning

What is the need of alternative learning methods and how can it be made effective?

Our education system was designed at the time when there was information paucity. The only source of learning was textbooks. Children could gain competitive advantage by having information on their fingertips and for this to happen, they had to memorise a lot of facts and figures. Unfortunately, we have continued with that system of learning for the children born in the new millennium.

Today, we live in an era of information but our methods of teaching still

emphasize on memorisation of facts. The methods of teaching and learning have become irrelevant in the times we live in and hence alternatives are needed. We need to move beyond recall and understanding to application, analysis and synthesis of knowledge, thus making learning for the 21st century.

What is the role of an organization like Creya in the current education system?

Creya is a harbinger of change in the current education system. We are focusing on bringing new methods of learning into the classrooms, such as Experiential, Inquiry Based, STEM, Project Based and Collaborative methods through setting up Learning Studios at schools. This is an innovative and pioneering effort to provide exposure for children and teach them "How to Learn". Creya is also ensuring children develop vital 21st century skills like Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Collaboration, Digital Literacy and Risk Taking to name a few. So while schools focus on learning "subjects", we are complementing them with new methods of learning and skills that complete the cycle of learning and ensure that the institution is imparting learning relevant to the 21st century.

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