

Importance of cultivating critical thinking & liberal education

In a tech-driven world, liberal education fosters creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary innovation. By blending technical expertise with the humanities, students develop problem-solving skills, empathy, and a human-centered approach to innovation. This educational model nurtures curiosity, encourages lifelong learning, and drives groundbreaking ideas. As India's higher education system embraces liberal learning through NEP 2020, students are being equipped to become future-ready innovators, leaders, and problem-solvers

PROF RAVIKESH SRIVASTAVA &
PROF
ANIRBAN GHOSH

In the digital age, a liberal education with a multidisciplinary approach is crucial for fostering creativity and innovation among students. One of the key advantages of liberal education in a tech-driven world is its emphasis on the development of not just soft skills and empathy, but also critical thinking. This liberal educational model nurtures curiosity and a passion for lifelong learning—both essential for innovation and entrepreneurship.

While technology and technical skills are important, true innovation arises from a deeper understanding of the



human experience, ethical considerations, creativity, and interdisciplinary connections. Innovation is about breaking boundaries and rethinking traditional models, which is vital for disrupting industries and generating new ideas. By combining liberal education with technical expertise, students are exposed to design thinking, which promotes problem-solving through human-centered approach and innovation. This approach prioritizes understanding users' needs, empathy, and creativity, leading to better products and services in the digital world. Steve Jobs famously credited much of his success at Apple to his background in calligraphy, design, and the liberal arts. His focus on aesthetics, user experience, and the intersection of technology with the humanities led to groundbreaking products.

In a fast-evolving digital era, the most significant innovations are likely to emerge from the blending of disciplines. Liberal education fosters interdisciplinary approaches by integrating insights from

the sciences, technology, management, design, arts, and humanities—key components for breakthrough innovations. At the same time, students must sharpen their expertise in one key area while developing a broad knowledge base across diverse fields. Exposure to various disciplines in a liberal education encourages the cross-pollination of ideas, a crucial driver of creativity and innovation.

Moreover, liberal education nurtures empathy and leadership, fostering individuals who can understand different perspectives, cultures, and values. These attributes are essential for inspiring collaboration and ensuring that technological progress aligns with ethical standards, societal needs, and sustainable practices. Such leaders and scholars are vital in shaping a future where technology serves humanity without causing harm.

Creativity thrives when individuals are open to new ideas and experiences. Students must cultivate curiosity and a willingness to learn from failures and experiments. It

is important for students to engage proactively in projects and exercises that encourage divergent thinking, such as brainstorming multiple solutions to a problem or exploring ideas without constraints. These innovative exercises help break free from linear thinking.

A blend of technology and cross-disciplinary learning often sparks new, creative ideas by combining insights from unrelated fields. To turn these ideas into feasible solutions—whether it's a digital product, app, design, or artistic creation—students should consider creating prototype models. Perseverance is equally important, as creativity and innovation rarely happen on the first attempt. An iterative process of creation, testing, feedback, and refinement is key to success.

Finally, students should move forward to test their idea and take advantage of platforms like hackathons, innovation challenges, and idea competitions, where you are tasked with finding creative solutions to real-world problems. This encourages rapid idea generation and innovation under

pressure. These environments help foster real-world problem-solving and creative thinking to further refine their idea before hitting to the real world.

In conclusion, developing creativity and innovation in today's digital world requires adopting new technologies, cultivating a mindset of continuous learning, and experimenting with creative expression.

By actively engaging in interdisciplinary learning, practicing problem-solving, and utilizing the vast array of digital resources available, students can enhance their creative and innovative abilities to thrive in the modern landscape.

Higher education in India is increasingly embracing creativity, innovation, and technology. Through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, evolving curricula, and university initiatives promoting liberal education, the focus of higher education is shifting towards preparing students to become future leaders with a mind-set of problem-solvers, innovators, and creators in this global digital world.