

Schools are killing creativity

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/06/05/schools-are-killing-creativity/>

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I [have posted a new YouTube video](#) this morning, and have returned to the theme of education. In this video I wonder what would happen if we had an education system that told people 'you can do that' rather than saying 'these are the rules that you must follow'? What might happen if we allowed all the resulting creativity to flow?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZyZgOdoGw8>

The audio version is:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=hhs6u-1631864-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=1&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

The transcript is:

If you ask a child to draw a picture once they've reached the age where they can basically hold a crayon, they will draw you a picture. It may not be the most wondrous work of art that you've ever seen, but in their imaginations, they have delivered you what you asked for, a picture of a dog, their parent, or whatever else it might be.

Or they will explain exactly what they think the picture is about in very clear language, to the extent that they've got it. And that's an amazing ability.

It's staggering because if you ask an 18-year-old to paint a picture, most of them will point-blank refuse. They'll say, "I can't", or "I've been taught about the rules of art, and I now know that I can't apply them, and therefore I can't paint a picture."

What does that say? It says that school removes a child's creativity.

This, by the way, is also true of storytelling. If you ask a five-year-old to tell a story in a reception class at a school, they will. If you ask an 18-year-old to tell a story, most of them will be completely tongue-tied or say, "That's beyond my ability."

I actually talked to some 18-year-olds recently about this very point and asked them, when was the last time they wrote anything creative? And their claim was that they hoped never to do so ever again in their lives. That was now behind them. School had removed that spark which they had at the age of five.

I find that profoundly worrying. We live in a world which clearly has to go through a process of change. Must do so if it is going to survive. It's impossible that it does anything else. That requires creativity and imagination from people to get through that process of change that will be demanded of us.

And yet, school basically teaches people that there are rules they must comply with, the whole purpose of which is to remove that creativity and make the person compliant with those rules, with the orders they've got, with the expectation of existing society, and the hierarchy within it.

What are we doing to children when we remove their creativity?

When you remove their ability to write creatively.

Maybe when you take away even, in the vast majority of people's cases, their ability to write a song.

Most of us will never try because we think we can't.

Suppose. we had an education system that told people you can, that was designed to make that possible, that explained how to release creativity and made that its focus rather than rule.

What will we then end up with?

Well, resilient people.

People who could cope with change.

People who could manage different careers, which many of us will have during the course of our lifetimes.

Who could manage changing life circumstances because they can cope.

See their way through it because they don't think there are rigid rules they've got to

comply with, but that there are creative opportunities that they must deal with.

I believe we are selling our children short.

I believe we're selling our young people short.

I believe we're selling ourselves short by saying we can't do things because there are rules that stop us.

Blow the rules, liberate people to explore their creativity. That is the most important thing that education can do, and I don't think we're getting anywhere close to succeeding at that goal.