



Supreeta Singh

**I**f the purpose of education is to prepare young minds to apply experience based knowledge in various known and unknown situations in life, then the need for practical learning should be the main focus of academic institutions. Rather than focusing on memorising, the trick is to make children emotionally and mentally equipped to face challenges of the world. With such a goal, Ashutosh Khurana, CEO, Mind Edutainment created 'My Thinking Programme', a structured and scientifically designed school programme which balances formal and informal education, largely influenced by Behavioural Science and based on the assumption that effective learning is a matter of a 'conditioned response'. Khurana talks about the various aspects of the programme, which will be launched in a few prominent schools of Kolkata by the end of the month. An excerpt from a chat:

**What exactly will children be taught in the 'My Thinking Programme'?**

This is an in-school, fully integrated Higher Order Thinking Skills development curriculum-delivery program for students of KG to 12th grade. The program lays emphasis on the development of thinking skills and thinking processes in a learner-centric, learner-induced environment, thereby focusing on an opti-

# Where the MIND is without fear

A new active learning process for children is aiming to create wholesome individuals by laying emphasis on providing appropriate experiences at the initial stages of personality development

mal functioning of a mind. The program draws forth the latent capabilities and sensitivities of the mind rather than filling it with pre-designed information. The core foundation of the programme envelops the findings of various brain researches including the finding that learning is most effective when it involves the brain's natural function of creating meaning from an experience. Hence, learning is natural, active and meaningful as it happens in the context of the experience that one goes through.

**How did you conceive the programme?**

It is based on Bloom's Taxonomy of 1956 where he had mentioned words that focus on developing certain qualities in growing individuals. We improvised the list and selected 200 words that provide life skills to students. For example, words like cross-the-king, problems solving and decision-making should be a way of thinking that applies to everyone irrespective of the context or environment. These skills are required to form a sensible value system that enables the child to become a well-integrated human being.

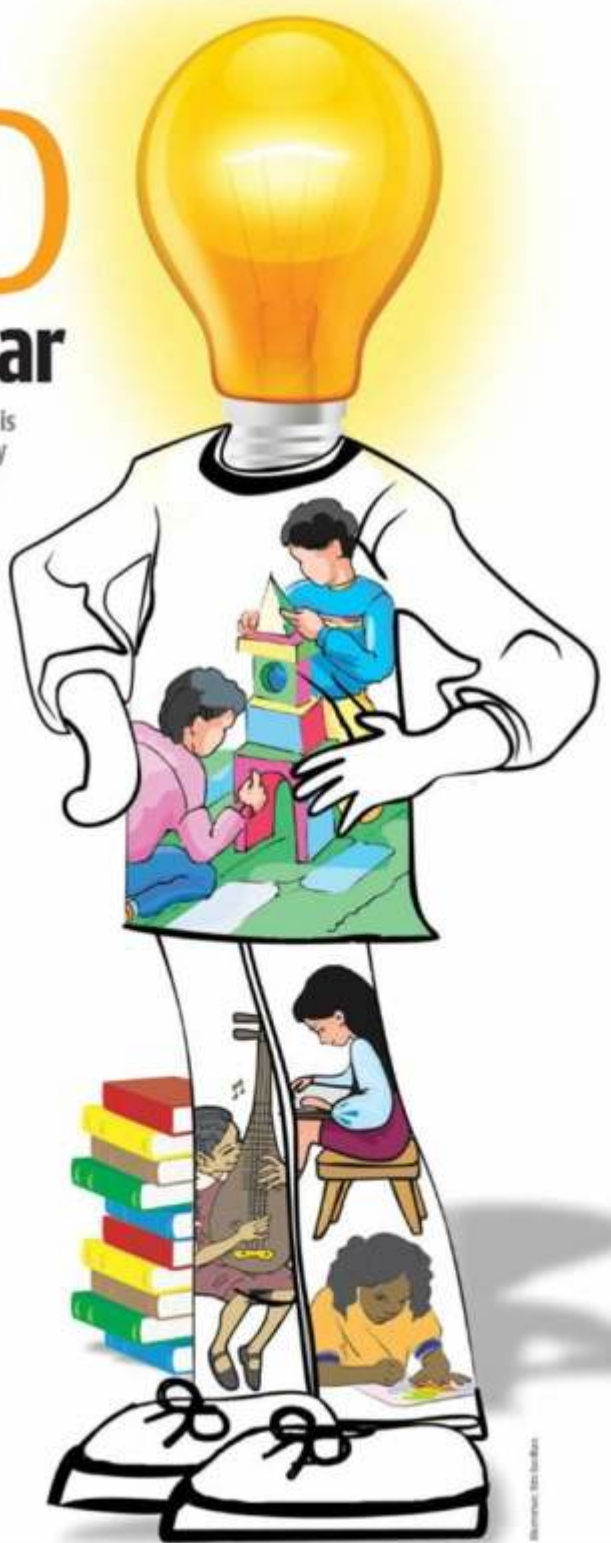
**What is the method of imparting instructions?**

We impart 30 lessons with 17 tools 12 worksheets in a year. Each class lasts for 60-70 minutes. There are five stages of methodol-

ogy - foundation, evaluation, integration, internalisation and externalisation. Story telling, streams, role playing, group discussions and games are some of the tools that we use. There are no right or wrong answers and those whom we find weaker, are given extra assignments to make them stronger with their life-skills. Currently, the programme is on at Delhi, Bangalore, Chandigarh and Jaipur. This year we are launching at Kolkata, Pune, Dehradun, Chennai, Cochin and Hyderabad.

**Since this is an extra-curricular activity, what qualifications do the facilitators require?**

The facilitator should be a friend and not a teacher. He or she can come from any stream - commerce, arts, science. But the person should have strong emotional quotient and very good language skills. He or she should be ready to think differently, unlearn and relearn if required, should be ready to imbibe new knowledge and of course understand the mind of children. We select facilitators first by taking telephonic interviews where we ask such strange questions like what did you do last night to see how they react to unknown situations. Then we call them for a personal chat. All our facilitators are permanent employees getting a salary between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000. We provide them 10 days of in-house training before they begin field work.



## Project Outsourcing

Shaoli Chakraborty

**T**here was a time when parents encouraged their children to take interest in extra-curricular activities, accepting this as part of their curriculum that aids mental growth and development of the child. Today, these days seem very long ago. For parents now look down upon project work in school deeming it largely as a waste of time. They, in fact, encourage their kids to outsource such assignments and even hire people to do it for them so that the child can use the time to do 'more fruitful' academic work. Says Indrani Ganguly, Principal, Shri Shikshapada School, "This is absolutely absurd. A project means research work and if it has been included in the curriculum then it is necessary for the child's learning process. Absence of an ability to conduct research hampers the growth of the child." Students, however, think differently. "We are laden with such a huge syllabus that we hardly get time to complete projects. Also I want to study science after my Matriculation and appear

for the joint entrance examination. Why should I waste my time doing history and geography projects?" says 16-year-old Anurita Sharma (name changed), a student of St John Diocesan School. Most parents whose words are appearing for board examinations sound the same. "When I have identified my child's interest area I egg him on to concentrate in that area only. After all these are extremely competitive times and I am willing to pay a draftsman for a project, if that helps my child save some time," said Kanika Gupta (name changed), mother of two teenage daughters. Can't teachers see the difference between a child's work and that of a professional hand? "Of course they can. As teachers we know how far a child can go since we see him/her everyday. We judge a project on various aspects - content, neat presentation and research. We are not judging an artist's work and don't expect children to come up with something that is highly unlikely of him. If parents are indulging their wards in such activities then I think it is them who need a bit of counselling."

Illustration: SDC Studios