

A teacher known for her innovative methods announced, "Today, I'm not going to teach any subject. Instead, I want you to raise interesting questions for a discussion. Are you ready?" The class cheered one by one, the questions tumbled out: Why does zero mean nothing? Why must two plus two always equal four? Why do we call a pen a 'pen'; if someone gave it another name, would it still be the same thing? The stunned teacher had not expected such probing, thought-provoking, and certainty-shaking questions.

Certainty and doubt

"There is one sin I have come to fear above all others: certainty. Certainty is the greatest enemy of unity; the deadliest foe of tolerance," said Cardinal Lawrence in the film *Conclave*, and adds, "Let us pray that God grants us a Pope who knows how to doubt." Reflecting on the quote, I wondered whether the Ministry of Education and school administrators should also pray for teachers who know how to doubt and who can instil that same spirit of curiosity in their students.

Certainty can hinder both thought and progress. Teachers who cling to certainty often resist challenge and discourage questioning. In doing so, they stifle curiosity, an essential quality that fuels fresh thinking, creative ideas,

The Hindu
Dt:01.09.25

Encourage them to doubt

With Teachers' Day round the corner, an educator stresses the need to celebrate curiosity in the classroom

and innovation. Curiosity and imagination are closely connected and share many common traits. Curiosity prompts questions and drives the desire to explore, while imagination generates new ideas and opens paths to new solutions.

Sadly, our education system seldom values the nurturing of either curiosity or imagination. Albert Einstein once declared, "Imagination is more important than knowledge," implying that knowledge is finite and limited to what is already known, whereas imagination allows us to explore possibilities beyond current understanding. It is a powerful driver of creativity and innovation. Yet the teaching community seems not to

have realised the value of imagination and the power of curiosity.

Those who doubt are often the most curious. They seek truth, question assumptions, and strive to grow. Teachers who embrace doubt encourage students to ask questions, explore ideas, and think deeply. Curiosity leads to clarity. It sparks innovation. It deserves to be celebrated in the classroom.

Does our education system celebrate certainty while discouraging curiosity? Why is certainty valued more than curiosity? Why is it important for teachers to encourage students to doubt? How can teachers help students become curious? Finding answers to these and other related, often unasked, questions can

help educators cultivate their own curiosity and make the classroom a better place for seeking knowledge.

Constructive response

Let's assume that a teacher in a class made the following statements: "The Earth is round." "I'm glad you are all very attentive in class." "The object is red in colour." Now let's imagine that some curious students raised the following questions: "If the Earth is round, why don't the people at the bottom fall off?" "How do you know I'm attentive in class and not just dreaming right now?" "Who decided that red should be called 'red'? What if it looks different to you than it does to me?"

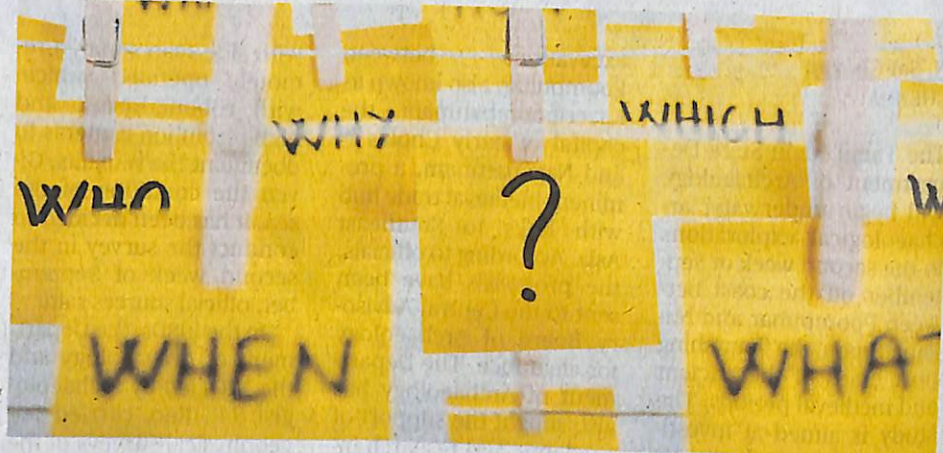
These questions chal-

lenge scientific certainty about gravity, raise doubts about the nature of reality, and question the certainty of language, meaning, and shared perception. In such situations, a teacher should use these moments as opportunities to develop reasoning, explore ideas,

A constructive teacher values questions rather than dismissing them. Even a simple "That's a good question" validates curiosity. Instead of giving ready-made answers, the teacher can ask, "What do you think?" turning passive listening into active reasoning. Some truths rest on evidence (like gravity keeping us on Earth), while others are shaped by human systems (like language and meaning). It is also fine for teachers to admit they don't know; saying, "Let's explore this together" shows that knowledge grows through inquiry, not certainty. Above all, the teacher's role is to keep curiosity alive.

A classroom blessed with curious students is like a garden of wonder, where questions bloom into creativity, innovation takes root, and the fragrance of new knowledge spreads everywhere. When teachers nurture learners' natural curiosity, both teachers and students grow wiser and inspire others to think, question, and imagine. What a beautiful garden such a classroom would be!

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