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How do you think?

Creative Thinking for the 21st Century

"The single biggest problem in the world is not finding great ideas but getting great ideas to move, to flow."

Charles Landry

Society is changing so quickly that being able to think creatively and adapt is essential. It is paramount that we all have the opportunity to practice and develop **thinking** as a **skill** and to nurture the ability we all have for Creative Thinking and problem solving.

Many people understand that Creative Thinking is somehow important; they just don't understand what it is and how to develop it.

How can we define Creative Thinking? Ultimately, Creative Thinking is the process and ability to have original ideas, problem solve and innovate. The first step is imagination, the capacity that we all have to see something in the mind's eye and then having the tools and techniques to apply imagination to solving a problem.

Creative thinking is a method that focuses on generating new ideas and developing different perspectives but instead of generating one solution it enables us to explore different options. Creative Thinking tools give us the capacity to organise our thinking into manageable areas, therefore leaving space for creative thoughts and processes to flourish.

According to Creative Thinking expert, Dr. Edward de Bono, the brain works as a self-organising information system. What this means is that most of the time the mind generates patterns and ideas from past experiences, and each time we face a new problem we search for an existing pattern we have to solve that problem.

However de Bono believes that every individual can become more creative if they can use creative thinking tools to break free of these patterns and explore new ideas, new options and new alternatives as possible solutions.



Creative Thinking for Innovation

There has been a recent movement throughout the EU to practically promote and support the traditional craft and contemporary skills sector. One of the challenges that the sector faces is how to develop innovative solutions to move forward. How can crafts people be more creative in marketing and selling their products? How can crafts people be creative in managing their employees? What about being more creative in utilising their limited resources? How can they break free of the old ways of thinking and problem solving and embrace the new ideas of creative thinking and innovation?



A consortium of four organisations coming from three different countries (Italy, The UK and Malta), have been given funding to develop a new creative thinking system for those working within the Creative Industries sector, primarily those working and training in craft based practices.

Creative Thinking can revolutionise HOW an individual or small enterprise develops their products, solves problems and fully realises their potential. Our project Handmade Creative Thinking (HCT) aims to provide the skills and techniques to enable this to happen.

Handmade Creative Thinking

The craft sector and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are economically and culturally important as they retain local, regional and national traditions whilst employing local primary materials and local labour, and making a large impact on the European economy. However they risk closure due to labour market fluctuations, the lack of skilled workers and international competition.

Handmade Creative Thinking (HCT) aims to address these issues through the transfer and re-invention of an innovative education based creative thinking technique, developed by Capture Arts in the UK, called the Capture System. This new tailor made thinking tool will enable people working and training within the crafts industry to acquire one of the most fundamental transversal skills, Creative Thinking. The Creative Thinking techniques developed in HCT will equip VET trainers with the skills to deliver Creative Thinking as a module during their workshops and classes.

Handmade Creative Thinking is a two year long project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo /Transfer of Innovation.

Activities during the Research Phase

One of the key principles of HCT is to discover what the needs of those working in Creative Industries are, in order to produce creative thinking tools that will have a lasting benefit. To achieve this the project partners have conducted a variety of research activities, including focus group workshops and contextual research.

The workshops saw members of the crafts and VET sectors exploring a range of activities designed to demonstrate what is meant by 'creative thinking', so that they would be better able to give their opinions on how useful creative thinking tools would be to them on a day to day basis.

The variety of backgrounds of the participants ranged from bakers to inventors. The wide range of specialist trades and skills of participants involved in the research means that development work on the prototype will be able to take into account a vast array of experiences and opinions, therefore ensuring that it will be applicable to a large range and cross section of people from the target groups.

Participants completed an in-depth questionnaire that covered many relevant areas of research including; time available for training, self-improvement, mental blocks and missing skills. The questionnaires also looked at each participant's creative profile, this was of particular importance as this data will be a key factor for the development of the new thinking tool.

The creative profiles showed a tendency to be creative in a manual way and to prefer learning by doing. There was a decided preference for training in how to use thinking tools that was delivered by a person or conducted on a one to one basis.

The next phase of HCT is the development of the prototype of the new thinking tool that will be tested with participants in January 2011. If you would like to find out more and get involved with the project please contact us via email at

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