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"HERE AND THERE ONE SEED SPROUTS, AND THEN IT SEEMS WE HAVE DONE SOMETHING": NURTURING CREATIVITY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: The Lisbon Strategy and other documents of the European Union advocating for a knowledge-based society have provided the ground for restructuring schools and changing pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, focusing on creativity and entrepreneurship. One of the approaches increasingly popular in Slovenia has been Edward de Bono's methodology. The article analyses the benefits, controversies, and potentials of de Bono's "lateral thinking" methods for increasing creativity when introduced to children in elementary school courses and extracurricular activities. Based on the qualitative study, it explores how this "pragmatic" approach to creativity is realised in Slovenian elementary schools, and reflects on teaching creativity in schools as a systemic approach.

Keywords: creativity, Edward de Bono, elementary school, lateral thinking, metaphors, Slovenia

INTRODUCTION

When my colleague researching contemporary short folklore forms told me about the workshop she had held with elementary school students, the most thought-provoking was her observation that all the proverbs and riddles they listed were traditional – in the sense of oral lore already transmitted to our generation from our parents, grandparents, or during school language courses. My main questions were thus: What has happened to creativity? Why didn't even direct encouragement produce something novel with the potential to become new school lore?

The situation was somehow expected – I had no grounds to believe that my children would perform any better than the workshop participants – but still puzzling. After all, children have been increasingly understood as "future human capital" and as "economic investments … [whose] returns are calculated in two ways: first, as the knowledge, skills, and competencies that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well-being, and second, as a means of saving on welfare spending" (Millei 2020: 930–931). Strategic development of the educational system has reflected this notion. The Lisbon Strategy attributed a key role to education in making the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" (Lisbon European Council 2000), while the Europe 2020 strategy recommended that governments should "focus school curricula on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship" (European Commission 2010: 11). Developing children's creativity is also defined as one of the educational aims of Slovenia (cf. Basic School Act 2006; Act on Gymnasiums 2007). This has created an ecosystem favouring and nurturing youth entrepreneurship culture (cf. Kozorog 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2021, 2023; Bajuk Senčar 2021; Petrović-Šteger 2021; Poljak Istenič 2021; Simonič 2021).

Since then, such an understanding of the educational system has provided the ground for restructuring schools and changing pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning (Millei 2020: 931). In Slovenia, schools – but also cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations – have been mostly concerned with talented children. Since the turn of the century, they have implemented enrichment activities and acceleration programmes in academic areas, sports and arts to enable the healthy psychosocial and academic development of talented children, cultivate their potential beyond compulsory schooling, and raise them into responsible citizens. The Centre for Research and Promotion of Giftedness at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana (CRSN), supports teachers in educating talented children and advocates for the latter (Juriševič n.d.).

Recently, some of the more popular approaches to "teach your child how to think" and develop "serious creativity" have been those of Edward de Bono, Maltese physician, psychologist, author, inventor, philosopher, and consultant who coined the term and methodology of lateral thinking. This is a methodology of making "a deliberate mental effort to change more automatic or steady responses" (Dingli 2009: 338), which *Forbes* magazine, at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, described as "the most valuable skill in difficult times" (Lewis 2020). The concept of lateral thinking includes several methodologies (e.g., CoRT,[1] six thinking hats, simplicity, etc.), but they all aim to generate new ideas and question the existing concepts and perceptions. De Bono never published academic studies on his work and methods; he was primarily occupied with developing creativity in practice. Still, the productivity of his pragmatic

approach (Sternberg & Lubart 1996) has been attested by numerous publications (also) stemming from practice.

The aim of the article is to explore how this pragmatic approach to creativity is realised in Slovenian elementary schools. Relying on the interviews with the trainer and the teacher of de Bono's methodology, it aims to answer the questions of the perceived benefits of such an approach to children's performance, of potential dilemmas regarding its use, and of the possibility for a systemic change towards teaching creativity in schools.

METHODOLOGY

The article results from a long-term study on creativity. It started in 2014, with a focus on creativity as a survival strategy (especially) in times of crises, continued with studying the creative city as a brand, and is currently dedicated to approaches to teaching creative and entrepreneurial skills in elementary and secondary schools. It relies on qualitative methods – participant observation and narrative interviews. Between 2019 and 2022, I attended five courses on de Bono methods for teachers, non-educational workers (mainly employed in the media, publishing houses, developmental agencies, the NGO sector, art scene, public services, etc.) or researchers, which were organised by licensed trainer Nastja Mulej. I followed the courses and informally discussed the topics concerning creativity with the participants, and interviewed the trainer several times to contextualise the information shared with me by the participants. In the article, I mostly rely on these interviews. I recently also started to experiment with de Bono methods in research and teaching to provide auto-ethnographic insights on the effects of the methods on students' thinking, imagining, and creativity.

During my fieldwork focusing on schools, I recorded interviews with teachers, headmasters and students from different Slovenian schools on how creativity and entrepreneurship are encouraged in classes, and with a prominent entrepreneurship trainer of the skills presumably needed in contemporary society and business. The interviews were later transcribed and used for analysis focusing on the development of entrepreneurial skills (Poljak Istenič 2021). The findings were also contextualised with other interviews concerning creativity in different contexts, for example on artistic interventions or the creative city (cf. Poljak Istenič 2017), and with presentations of the teachers explaining to the participants of de Bono courses how they use the methods in their classes. The latter were recorded by the abovementioned trainer and given to me on my request.

One of the recordings, with Slovene elementary school language teacher Ana (a pseudonym), stood out not only due to the variety of settings in which

the teacher used de Bono's approach, but also because it partly focused on developing skills traditionally considered creative, for example writing and visual arts. I thus decided to build a case-study on her experience, as I found it illustrative and indicative of my argumentation. I additionally conducted an in-depth interview with her, and used the transcript to present my case.

The limitations of this study stem from a narrow focus and a lack of ethnographic research in the classroom. The modest ambition of this article is thus to introduce an aspect of creativity research in Slovenia not yet explored, that is, the usage of the de Bono methods in elementary school, with the prospect of supplementing it with ethnographic observation in the classroom in the near future.

In the article, I first explain the concept of creativity and contextualise it with de Bono's views on the topic, continue with the case study of implementing de Bono's methods in elementary school, analyse controversies stemming from such an approach, and conclude with a reflection on teaching creativity in schools as a systemic approach.

CREATIVITY: DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENTS

In this article, I deal with creativity in a psychological sense, that is, as a characteristic of a person. In academic literature, psychologist Joy Paul Guilford is usually attributed a pioneering role in empirical research on creativity despite some earlier attempts in other academic disciplines (Albert & Runco 1999; Becker 1995). The first wave of studies in the 1950s and 1960s focused on personality psychology and attempted to define the "creative personality" (cf. Guilford 1950). The second wave of studies (from the 1970s) dealt with cognitive psychology and aimed to determine what goes on in the mind of people when they engage in creative activity. Finally, sociocultural approaches focused on complex relationships between individuals, groups, cultures, and organisations that affect creative outcomes (Sawyer 2012 [2006]). They rejected the "lone genius myth" (Montuori & Purser 1995; Weisberg 1986) and advocated that creativity is a social phenomenon depending on social interactions and teamwork. It was studied in managerial, organisational, and educational settings (Fischer et al. 2005; Watson 2007; Wilson 2010).

These studies produced more than a hundred definitions (Smith 2005), but none of these have become widely accepted, neither as a general definition nor in certain contexts or domains, for example, in educational settings. The most used in the latter has allegedly been that of psychologist Morris Stein's (Zupan & Stritar & Slavec Gomezel 2017: 171), which defines the creative work as "a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a group in

some point in time … By 'novel' I mean that the creative product did not exist previously in precisely the same form. It arises from a reintegration of already existing materials or knowledge, but when it is completed it contains elements that are new. The extent to which a work is novel depends on the extent to which it deviates from the traditional or the status quo. This may well depend on the nature of the problem that is attacked, the fund of knowledge or experience that exists in the field at the time, and the characteristics of the creative individual and those of the individuals with whom he is communicating" (Stein 1953: 311).

When we sum up academic definitions, novelty (originality, surprise) is the most underlined characteristic of creativity, closely followed by efficiency (functionality, adaptability) of the idea (cf. Sternberg & Lubart 1996; Simonton 2009). Some also stress openness, freedom, flexibility, unconformity and other features of uniqueness and usefulness. They focus either on the processes that generate creative ideas, persons who produce the ideas, or products resulting from the ideas; as summed up by Dean Keith Simonton (2009: 248), "[p]resumably, creative persons who have engaged in the creative process produce creative products".

In Slovenia, most of the research on creativity in a psychological sense has been linked to talented children (cf. Juriševič 2009, 2012; Žagar & Juriševič 2011; Juriševič & Stritih 2012; Košir et al. 2016; Torkar et al. 2018; Cvetković-Lay & Juriševič 2020; Licul & Juriševič 2022). As noted by de Bono (2018 [1991]: 2), "[i]n our intellectual culture, we have acknowledged the value of creativity but treated it as a special gift which some people might have and others can only envy. This view of creativity has applied mainly to artistic work". A commonplace school stereotype is thus that creativity is in the domain of courses concerned with aesthetics or manual work/creation such as visual arts, technology, music, and language (e.g., imaginative essay writing). This reflects the views that teachers of art (and in some circumstances also of language and technology) have "great potential … to have a powerful impact on teaching and processes in traditionally non-creative fields" (Gustina & Sweet 2014: 52). As noted by Ana, when the school needs to prepare an event, for example, for national holidays, "Who will do it? Let the teachers of Slovene do it, they are creative! And I always tell them: 'Do you think we had a graduate course on event preparation?' Indeed, such obligation absolutely tends to fall on the shoulders of the music, visual arts and Slovene language teachers" (Interview Ana 2022).

De Bono, however, was "interested in the creativity involved in the changing of perceptions and concepts". He stressed that his notion of creativity may overlap with artistic creativity, but that "[t]here is no reason to suppose that an artist will make a good teacher of creativity simply because the word creativity is involved in art" (de Bono 2018 [1991]: 9). He referred to "serious creativity" as the skills that permit and encourage the generation of useful novelty.

Creative, or lateral, thinking is thus an approach related to using systematic methods, which can be "learned, practiced, and used by everyone … Learning lateral thinking will not make everyone a genius, but it will supplement existing thinking skills with a valuable ability to generate new ideas" (de Bono 1993: 310). He further explained that "[p]eople who are talented in creativity find that the training and formal techniques enhance their skill. People who have never considered themselves to be creative find that the formal techniques allow them to build up a useful skill of creativity – and the creative attitudes follow from the use of the tools. People who are conformist and have hitherto believed that creativity is only for 'rebels' find that conformists can learn the 'game' of creativity and can become even more creative than the rebels. There is not an either-or polarization between talent and training. As with any skill, the two go together" (de Bono 2018 [1991]: 9).

Lateral thinking encompasses several methodologies; however, Six Thinking Hats (also called parallel thinking) and the Cognitive Research Trust (CoRT) programme are most often used in the educational setting. The former consists of six different modes of thinking, focusing on planning, facts, emotions, ideas, benefits, and risks, and helps to resolve conflicts, solve problems, make a decision or generate new insights (de Bono 1985).[2] The latter includes six programmes specifically designed for educational context with the aim to teach students "all the skills to use their own mind effectively" (Mulej n.d.).[3] The programmes develop the breadth of perception, organisation of thinking, the ways of interaction (argumentation), creativity (changing patterns and concepts), recognising information and feelings, and the ways to guide thinking (action). The article focuses on the latter, especially on CoRT 1 (breadth) and CoRT 4 (creativity), which are most often used in elementary schools in Slovenia.

Despite numerous books explaining the tools and advocating their usefulness, the key to master the methods is, according to my interlocutors, practice. As they explained time and again, they found the books useful only after they had attended the course, learned the tools, done some exercises and then continuously used them in practice. It is thus, in their experience, extremely important not only to introduce these to students and make sure students learn them, but also for them to use these consistently and regularly. This, in turn, also allows the comparison of students using the described methods regularly and those who think and create in a "traditional" way, that is, as practiced in school settings following conventional approaches to teaching and learning. All my interlocutors who used the CoRT methods during class or organised trainings as an extracurricular activity claimed that all children performed better in school, but also admit that they cannot "measure", or "grade", the improvement of creative thinking:

> *I think it can't be measured. Firstly, I think creativity is also a matter of subjectivity. We have different views of it; what right do I have to judge whether something is good or not. But on the other hand, I do recognise* [after all those years of teaching] *when someone creates something … that has not been created till then, or something that is really very good. Usually, the children can also recognise breakthroughs and different levels among themselves.* [You know that] *because they applaud* [peers creating something good]. (Interview Ana 2022)

However, several researchers did test the efficiency of de Bono's methods to improve creativity, using standardised approaches such as divergent thinking tests, attitude and interest inventories, personality inventories, and biographical inventories (Hocevar 1981). The most often used are the former, especially the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), which focus on fluency (number of relevant responses), flexibility (number of different categories of relevant responses), originality (the statistical rarity of the responses), and elaboration (amount of detail in the responses) as key elements of creativity (Torrance 1966). A study of Slovenian pupils from the 5th and 6th grades (i.e., children between 10 and 12 years old), who worked according to CoRT 1 and CoRT 4 programmes, showed that they generated significantly more ideas and improved their achievements in all parameters of creative thinking (fluency, flexibility, originality) compared to their peers who did not receive training (Gnamuš Tancer 2016). International studies confirm the Slovenian findings.

DE BONO IN SLOVENIA: FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF THE METHODOLOGY TO THE CASE-STUDY OF ITS PRACTICE

According to Nastja Mulej, the only licensed trainer of de Bono techniques in Slovenia and the beginner of de Bono courses in this country, Edward de Bono gave his first lecture in Slovenia in 2003 at the Ideas Campus, an annual summer school of creative thinking in Piran. Mulej became passionate about his methods: "I will never forget what it was like, you know, when a lecture changes you, when you finally understand, you have the feeling that you understand. That-that-that is it!" (Interview Mulej 2016). She thus decided to introduce de Bono's approach to Slovenian business and educational organisations. She continued to invite him to have lectures, started to translate his books into the Slovenian language, and when he suggested that she become a trainer of his techniques, she attended several courses and gained a licence to teach them

independently. She started training children and teachers in 2011 so that "there would be no rote learning that doesn't help children at all" (Interview Mulej 2021). Until June 2019, she educated 452 teachers from 253 institutions to work with children, utilizing de Bono methods.

One of the teachers who attended the de Bono courses was Ana, who teaches Slovenian at a Ljubljana elementary school. She learned about de Bono while mentoring a student who prepared a class on a book children read at home by using de Bono's Six Thinking Hats. She was intrigued by the method, so she bought several of de Bono's books, but because "de Bono is not to read, it's to study", she started to attend courses by Nastja Mulej. She has since used his approaches at a Slovenian language course for children from the 6th to the 9th grade, in a weekly extracurricular activity called "Thinking Circle", and in summer camps for talented children. "The biggest problem with the children of this time is … that they take thinking as exhausting," she explained the rationale for using de Bono methods; it is not so much a problem of motivation, but rather concentration. Children lack focus, and the biggest challenge she sees is maintaining and imparting the focus of thinking to children.

> *A child has to focus on some work and create something, … one product. They ask me: 'How much do I have to write?' … This productivity limit is very, very low for them. They fill in something and it's done, they do the task and it's done. It doesn't matter how well he thought, he thinks: 'I was thinking, I did the exercise, I wrote it.' … They are too quickly satisfied, unable to keep focus. … They must be taught that these things are not self-evident.* (Interview Ana 2022)

Deficiencies improved after using de Bono methods, and according to the knowledge standards, she has been able to give children higher grades.

When explaining examples of the use of these methods, she specifically underlined a creative camp for talented children she organises together with a visual arts teacher who is also skilled in de Bono methodologies. Its aim is to develop literary and visual creativity. At one of the previous camps, they focused on strengthening self-awareness and self-understanding of the children, and on developing their creativity by working on the metaphorical expression of their personality in literary and visual form. Using CoRT 1 methods (PMI, FIP, CAF, and APC), they developed personal logotypes reflecting their positive, negative and interesting characteristics expressed metaphorically. First, they worked individually and then discussed ideas in groups. Each participant visualised his/her logotype and then "read" his/her peers' logotypes (using APC) to master the understanding of metaphors. Then they also literalised their logotypes, describ-

ing themselves as an "object" expressing the personal characteristics (who they are, where and with whom they live, what they like and do not like to do, what they would like to become; for example, "pink leather spike on ballet shoes" which is "very driven, so I always dance to the end despite getting untied or forgetting the steps" and is "bitter and rudely sharpened" when in a bad mood). Using CoRT 4 (random entry and PO), they also created new metaphors; the tools "made the task interesting" and "encouraged them to become creative". The aim of using de Bono approaches was to "learn how to think, train thinking, and become aware that they will be able to use their talent to the maximum with perseverance and planned thinking" (Interview Ana 2022).

When inquiring about the oral lore in the Slovenian language course, she confirmed the findings of Saša Babič's (2019) analysis that it is mainly represented by folk tales and partly by folk songs, while short folklore forms are generally not included in school readers or children's magazines. They receive the most – although still very limited – attention in the first grades; in higher grades, idioms get the most attention when practicing the figurative use of language and metaphorical expression. As such, oral lore represents a productive material for practicing CoRT 4 methods. She experimented with this approach at one of the camps for talented children, focusing on proverbs and their visualisation, following similar steps than previously described with personal logotypes. The children started to visualise the chosen proverbs individually and then worked on group illustrations. They practiced art criticism and metaphorical understanding using the CoRT 1 tools, then moved to CoRT 4 to connect objects from the environment to certain proverbs and later used these proverbs as a stepping stone to create new stories built on metaphors and associations. The method proved successful, based on the number of ideas produced and the quality of their creations.

Despite Ana's statement that the evaluation of creativity is necessarily subjective, she has been convinced that children significantly improve in focus, productivity (quantity of ideas), quality of the content (the depth of thinking about a given subject), breadth of thinking, novelty of ideas, and thoroughness (stemming from in-depth research) when working with de Bono methods. However, the analysis of the creations she presented (illustrations and essays) implies the biggest improvement is evident in metaphorical thinking. In creativity research, metaphors – being a "fertile mental resource for combining two terms to explain the unknown … [by] finding similarities between new experiences and what is already familiar to us" – are understood as the means to which creative thinking resorts when formulating and solving problems and searching for valuable new ideas (Romo 2020: 150, 153). They are not only important in language acquisition (cf. Babič 2019), but also contribute to the capacity to

convey emotion and aesthetic sensations in the arts, render comprehensible complex knowledge in science, and serve to persuade people in advertising, design, and innovation within organisations. As explained by Manuela Romo, "the production techniques for creative ideas applied in these fields are based on metaphors, their production and their evaluation and selection. … All this leads to producing novel ideas that are useful in dealing with ill-defined problems in the mentioned fields" (Romo 2020: 155–156). The need for metaphorical thinking is thus recognised as necessary for persons entering the work life, which increasingly requires imagination within strategic decision-making. A case-study published by Ryman, Porter and Galbraith (2009) showed that participants in a business schools' experimental project were engaged in tasks similar to Ana's pupils at the creative camp. The pupils presented their personality in the form of a visual metaphor, and then translated it to linguistic metaphors in an essay; while the participants of the mentioned study transformed artistic images into metaphorical language and then translated metaphorical language into the literal language of business. The process focusing on the metaphor enhanced ways of knowing and learning; it enriched educational experience and promoted a deeper understanding of the business management concept.

THE ETHICS OF TEACHING: POTENTIAL CONTROVERSIES OF DE BONO METHODS

My experience with learning and working with de Bono methods presented me with three important controversies concerning individual vs. group work, systematisation of the process vs. creative results, and ethics, which can become a sensitive issue when working with children.

De Bono methods encourage writing down all sorts of ideas, including, to use de Bono's word, "crazy" ones which can be ethically controversial. When undergoing training, several ideas I wrote down while practicing different tools were such that I would censor them before sharing them with children, because the ideas were egoistical, anti-social, and generally against my own values and those of the society I live in. My interlocutors did not list many experiences of facing ethical dilemmas arising from the ideas students proposed, and the advice from Nastja Mulej on how to deal with such situations is to treat every idea equally, and not elaborate on it if we find it inappropriate. Ana confirmed she treated such ideas as any others, and did not evaluate them. She also pointed out the importance of authority; she would explain her values to children and stress that their idea was not in line with them. For her, authority implies mutual respect.

However, some situations do call for intervention. Ana recalled a case of a girl who had to predict consequences of a bad grade in mathematics (C&S tool from CoRT 1), and as a long-term consequence the girl predicted her death; as Ana recalled, she gathered that due to one bad grade, she would not be accepted to the desired school, would not get a good job, would become depressed and die of an overdose of antidepressants. Despite the absurdity of such a conclusion for adults, the child was in distress, so the teacher intervened and, in our conversation, reflected on the need to direct some ideas into another, more positive direction.

The lack of ethical reflection of my interlocutors and the simplistic advice on how to treat such examples might be rooted in the Western understanding of creativity, which pays more attention to people's individual characteristics. In comparison, people in the East more often view creativity as having social and moral values. Niu and Sternberg (2002) explain that morality is a unique conception in the Chinese's understanding of creativity, which also follows ethical standards; due to the collectivist orientation, group interests and morality play a more important role in understanding individual creativity in the East compared to the Western implications of the concept. The researchers also argue that the norms and values of the Eastern and Western cultures play a critical role in influencing an individual's creativity. Collectivistic Eastern cultures discourage the development of creativity on account of conformity and obedience, while more individualistic Western cultures advocate for self-exploration more than for following social norms.

This brings us to another dilemma regarding the use of de Bono's approaches, that is, individual vs. group work. De Bono underlines the importance of group work since "brainstorming has always depended on a group format because this is an essential part of the process. The presence of other people in the group provides the stimulation to set off new ideas and new lines of thinking" (2018: 7). Similarly, de Bono teachers also advocate working in groups, as "one can remember only a limited number of things, on account of being constrained by information and experience" (Interview Mulej 2016) and they report better outcomes compared to individual work. However, at the start of each exercise, children are expected to list their ideas on their own in order to share them with others later on, and to contribute as equally as possible to the final outcomes. De Bono himself also underlines the need to combine both ways of thinking, arguing that "individuals working systematically on their own produce far more ideas than when they are working together as a group. There is more thinking time and different directions can be pursued. Groups do have their value both as a motivating setting and also to develop the ideas that have already been started" (de Bono 2018: 7–8).

The experimental studies also show that individual work improved fluency compared to group work, while group work resulted in stronger flexibility and originality (Svensson & Norlander & Archer 2002). By encouraging both types of work, we can also allow and encourage ethical reflections of the ideas from the individual and social perspective.

The third controversy I find important to reflect upon is the premise that creativity is supposed to produce unique ideas, while de Bono advocates structure and systematics. Such unease with this approach was also mentioned by Ana, who illustrated her scruple with the metaphor of a keychain with twenty keys, which might open many doors yet limit us in the ways we open them. She attended an event organised with the help of de Bono methods that was very structured and made her feel "like a robot", as if she had to follow everything already defined in advance. She experienced the event feeling her values – spontaneity, intuition, empathy – might not be recognised enough, or were even stifled by the focus, systematisation and even routinisation implied by the use of de Bono methods. However, she is now aware that emotions are only one way (a "red thinking hat") of how to perceive phenomena, and that there is never only one option; there are hundreds of alternatives which "calm you down in this feeling of hopelessness" (Interview Ana 2022). Nastja Mulej, on the other hand, was frustrated by working long hours with the artists who understood creativity as "waiting for inspiration", so de Bono's notion of creativity as systematic came as a relief to her. She underlines creativity as being a "healthy lifestyle ... something that needs to be practiced daily ... There are always different options to develop a pattern inside our brain. And if I try, I'll know how to find it" (Interview Mulej 2016).

CONCLUSION

Despite numerous studies on de Bono's methods reporting the increase of creativity and improvement of children's performance in school, the introduction of the methodologies to the educational setting "stays entirely on the individual level, depending on those of us who use de Bono's tools ... we do not move any systemic boundaries here, however, we should change something in the curricula. So, teachers idealistically use them inside their bubble, are being creative, and believe in this approach" (Interview Ana 2022). Nastja Mulej, who is also a member of the strategic council for entrepreneurial behaviour at the Slovenian Ministry of Education now working towards a systemic introduction of creativity in education, underlines that "it is not systemic or structural, it

all depends on the commitment of the individuals, their enthusiasm to do it, and their courage" (Interview Mulej 2021).

However, in the past decade, the ministry did encourage different pedagogical approaches to develop children's creativity and entrepreneurial behaviour by implementing financial schemes for extracurricular activities, such as HOPES – Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Innovation (UPI – *Ustvarjalnost*, *Podjetništvo*, *Inovativnost*), COURAGE – Entrepreneurial behaviour, building block of young people's self-confidence (POGUM – *POdjetnost*, *Gradnik zaUpanja Mladih*), and FEAT – Entrepreneurial behaviour in the gymnasium (PODVIG – *PODjetnost V GImnaziji*); some of the mentors of these activities were trained in de Bono methods and used them to work with children, although this was not the goal of the activities. The latter two projects were short-term and also interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemics, which disrupted children's learning process and compromised the expected results. This, in turn, also prevented any serious consideration of systemic change based on the experience with creative approaches, so the effort to implement them in the school setting remains in the hands of enthusiastic teachers and headmasters, or the schools explicitly oriented towards raising entrepreneurial students (cf. Poljak Istenič 2021).

According to my interlocutors, they do make a difference as it is, though to a limited extent. "Here and there one seed sprouts, and then it seems we have done something," Nastja Mulej summed up a general impression of the pedagogical personnel developing the field of creativity in education (Interview Mulej 2021). The teachers who start to teach children that are already skilled in de Bono methods report a considerable difference in focus (concentration) and performance compared to non-trained children, and one gymnasium Slovenian language teacher underlined that she immediately recognised the children who had undergone de Bono training, on the account of their essay writing and thinking approach. The efforts of individual teachers thus might get us closer to a systemic change in teaching children how to think and be creative. In the words of Ana:

> *I always say: let's not complain about what we don't have, let's focus on what we have. I think the greatest value is to compel the rest of our colleagues. Then one attends training, and soon there are eight or eleven trained teachers* [in de Bono methods] *at one school – in this way we can produce shifts* [toward a systemic change]. (Interview Ana 2022)

To conclude, the article is a reflection on the potential of the pragmatic approach to creativity for the life of school lore. The curriculum envisages lifelong and intergenerational learning, where de Bono methods undoubtedly show potential

impact. Transmission of ethnological and folklore content can be improved with the described approach, and at the same allow folk material to perpetuate – differently, adapted to the milieu of younger generations – and not become a mere relic in social memory. The collecting of school lore could thus be widened by the inquiry of its recognition in different contexts, of new contextualisation, and its modification. And school lore, when examined through the CoRT methods, might even become a creative expression of the contemporary youth.

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NOTES

[1] Cognitive Research Trust.

[2] The main CoRT 1 tools aim to widen perceptions and guide students to (1) think about negative, positive and interesting aspects of the phenomenon (PMI tool); (2) consider all factors (CAF); (3) think about consequences and sequel (C&S); (4) define the aims, goals and objectives (AGO); (5) consider the first important priorities (FIP); (6) think about alternatives, possibilities and choices (APC); (7) consider other people's views (OPV); as well as (8) set up and challenge rules; (9) plan the tasks; and (10) make decisions.

[3] CoRT 4 tools aim to develop creativity and help students to change patterns and concepts by using (1) Yes, No and PO tool (a way of looking at things; PO stands for provocative operation); (2) Stepping Stone (to use an outrageous idea as a stepping stone to other ideas); (3) Random Input (bringing in something random/unconnected to the situation in order to trigger new ideas); (4) Concept Challenge (a way of not taking things for granted); (5) Dominant Idea (recognising the main ideas behind a situation in order to not be restricted by them); (6) Define the Problem (what is the purpose of thinking); (7) Remove Faults; (8) Combination (putting together things that have existed separately in order to create something new); (9) Requirements; and (10) Evaluation (evaluating the idea according to a specific situation).

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Interview materials from 2016–2022 in possession of the author.

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